

# INDULGENCES

THEIR ORIGIN, NATURE, AND  
DEVELOPMENT

BY

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*"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden  
in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for  
joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth  
that field."—MATT. xiii. 44.*

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## APPROBATIONS

By request of the Right Rev. Father General, having examined the work bearing the title "Indulgences, &c.," written by the Rev. Father Alexius M. Lépicier, O.S.M., I have much pleasure not only in bearing witness to the soundness of the doctrine therein contained, but also in expressing a conviction that many advantages will accrue to the faithful, as well as to many outside the fold of the Church, from the perusal of the same.

PEREGRINE M. STAGNI, O.S.M.

S. MARIA IN VIA, ROME,  
*Feast of St. Agatha, 1895.*

HAVING seen the approbation given by the Rev. Peregrine M. Stagni, a Theologian of our Order, and Professor of Philosophy at the College of Propaganda, Rome, to the book entitled "Indulgences, &c.," written by the Rev. Alexius M. Lépicier, likewise a Theologian of our Order, and Professor of Divinity at the same College, we hereby sanction the publication of the same, subject to the Imprimatur of the Ordinary.

Given at Rome, from our Monastery of St. Marcellus, February 6, 1895.

L. ✠ S. FR. ANDREW M. CORRADO,  
*Prior-General of the Order of the Servants  
of Mary.*

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ARCHIEP. WESTMON.

*Febr. 10, 1895.*



## P R E F A C E

THE first idea of writing a book on the subject of Indulgences presented itself to the author's mind while engaged in missionary work in England. The thought gradually impressed him, borne out by experience, that both enlightened believers might find a confirmation of their faith, and inquisitive minds assistance in their search after truth, if this point of Catholic dogma, not of the lightest, were set before them in a concise manner, yet with all possible clearness. For, the doctrine of "Indulgences" is closely connected with the main tenets of our faith, such as the imputableness of sin and good works, the efficacy of atonement and regeneration, the communion of saints and the power of the keys.

But such a study, he found, could not be satisfactorily complete, unless, to the exposition of the doctrine, a sketch were added on the history of the practice of Indulgences in the Church. Holy Scripture, then, was first to be consulted, and asked to put forth its own evidence, if it had any, on the matter at hand; then history was to be referred to, from the Apostolic times to the first centuries of the Church, and from thence, through the pilgrimages, crusades,

and jubilees of the Middle Ages, down to the epoch of the Reformation, and from it to our own days.

Again, the doctrine itself, no less than the practice of Indulgences, required for its right understanding, that an exposition should be made—brief, yet not obscure—of the penitential discipline as used in the primitive Church. Those practices of earlier days are not for a Christian a dead letter. They teach him what his forefathers in the faith were able to bear; and they enable him to mete his own generosity by theirs. Apart, then, from the close connection which they have with our subject, the interest which they should rouse in the hearts of the faithful will, we trust, be a sufficient apology for the introduction of a whole chapter bearing on that matter.

It will, therefore, be found that this book is not a “Raccolta,” nor an abridgment of the many decrees which, at different times, the Holy See has issued on Indulgences. It is a doctrinal exposition of this point of Catholic teaching, viewed in connection with the other tenets of our creed and the perpetual practice of the Church.

To the reader of a more cultured taste, the book may appear to proceed somewhat clumsily in its form and in the distribution of its parts. Delicate ears, too, may be offended by the occasional recurrence of, as it will be thought, harsh-sounding scholastic terms.

For the imperfections which may occur, no better apology can be made than the declaration that the

following pages were written at hours borrowed from more important and commanding duties. The work was for the author a work of love, and from this alone he drew his inspiration. For, Indulgences are an abiding pledge of the love of God to man, and of the love of man to both God and his neighbour.

As for the scholastic terms, so far from attempting to replace them by others, the writer is of opinion that much of their supposed barbarity would be rubbed out, were they in more frequent use with Catholic writers. They are, according to the authority of the Church, the best adapted to give expression to the mysteries of our holy faith. Besides, men are not made for words, but words for men.

On the whole, the publication of this work may be thought a bold attempt on the part of the writer. Indeed, it is nothing less. Yet, when we see the Church made every day the butt of new attacks, when misrepresentation has supplanted history, when the literature of the day feeds on nothing but vain shadows and empty dreams, who will blame a son of the Church for braving his insufficiency, and daring take up arms in favour of truth? He who can do much should do much; he who can do little will not be justified in remaining inactive. Beside the costly gifts dropped in the *corbona* at Jerusalem by the hands of the wealthy Jews, Our Saviour did not disdain, but rather commended, the widow's mite.

This work, we said, has been a work of love. The author will be amply repaid for his labours,



if the perusal of the following pages awake in a Christian heart a sentiment of love for Our Redeemer, "who was bruised for our sins,"<sup>1</sup> and of sympathy for suffering human nature. This, of all others, will be a sign of God's blessing on this work. As "no man can say 'the Lord Jesus,' but by the Holy Ghost,"<sup>2</sup> so can no man "put on the bowels of mercy"<sup>3</sup> but through Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, the author declares that he submits this work to the judgment of the Church, the Mother and Mistress of truth, from whose teaching it is his firm purpose not to depart. He likewise is glad to have this opportunity of giving a public expression to his sense of heartfelt gratitude to the kind friends who, either by advice, suggestions, encouragement, or timely helps, have enabled him to bring out this book. May they be requited a hundredfold for their generous assistance and friendly interest by the Giver of all goods.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 12.

SANTA MARIA IN VIA, ROME,

*Feast of the Seven Holy Founders of the Order of  
the Servants of Mary, 1895.*

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# INDULGENCES

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### DEATH AND THE TREE OF LIFE

*"They shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices."*—PROV. i. 31.

#### THE NATURE OF SIN AND OF GOOD WORKS

Death a consequence of sin—The twofold guilt of sin—It is cancelled only by true sorrow—Luther on Penance—The Scriptural meaning of this word—Temporal debt—The power of satisfaction—A threefold case—Christ's superabundant satisfactions—What of these if not applied—The Communion of Saints—Peter de Blois to the Monks of Chichester—The Church Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant—The mystery of suffering.

I. THE works of God, as they come from His hands, are perfect. What the crowds said of Christ, according to His Humanity, when He had opened the ears and loosed the string of the tongue of the man that was deaf and dumb, should be said of Him according to His Divinity, and with reference to all His works: "He hath done all things well."<sup>1</sup> And so, when "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them, God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. ii. 1, i. 31.



One being, in the visible creation, was more perfect than any other. It was the last of God's works, who seemed to have exhausted in creating it the boundless treasures of His Wisdom, of His Goodness, of His Power. This was man, whom God had "made to the image of His own likeness, and therefore incorruptible;"<sup>1</sup> whom He had raised to the supernatural order, that is to say, to eternal life, consisting in the vision of God's essence, not "through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face,"<sup>2</sup> and in the love unbounded, mutual, transforming of His supreme bounty. However, this most beautiful of God's works was marred by His own enemy: the devil waxed jealous of man, and "through his envy, death came into the world."<sup>3</sup>

But death was brought in by sin: indeed, it could not have entered the world unless man himself had opened a door for it; for God had given man immortality, and "His gifts are without repentance."<sup>4</sup> And so, sin was brought into the world by man's transgression, and through sin, death: but that sin passed upon all men, who are ever born of the first man, and so from the first man death has pervaded the whole of humanity: "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."<sup>5</sup>

To avert the action of death upon man, God had planted "in the midst of Paradise the tree of life,"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. ii. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xi. 29.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Wisd. ii. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. ii. 9.

the fruit of which had the power of preserving him in a constant state of health and vigour. But by sin man, driven from Paradise, had no longer access to the tree of life. Moreover, the death brought in by sin was not of the body only, but of the soul as well — the soul deprived of the friendship of God, the body exposed to the deadly influence of its conflicting elements.

But God could not be outdone by the devil, the essentially Good by the evil one. And so He decreed that “where sin had abounded, grace should more abound.”<sup>1</sup> The tree of life in Paradise was no longer accessible, but He would have another *Tree*, not planted in Paradise, but the presence of which would make the earth a Paradise, bearing forth, not one fruit only, but two most delicious fruits : the one destined to give life again to the soul, the other to give relief to the body ; the one intended to cure eternal death, the other to be a remedy against the temporal penalty that ensued therefrom.

Of the first we have not here to speak. It is nothing but “the grace of God through Jesus Christ,”<sup>2</sup> which comes to us through the virtue of the Blood of Jesus, cancels sin, and gives eternal life. We will only speak of the second fruit. It consists in the satisfaction of Jesus, and has for its effect the remission of the temporal debt due to our sins. But before we proceed any further, it is necessary that we should bear in mind the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 25.

teaching of the Catholic Church about sin and the guilt thereof.

2. When a man offends God wilfully, his soul contracts a twofold guilt in His sight: the one is a guilt of *stain*, by which it becomes defiled, loathsome, an object of disgust, of execration, of abomination in the sight of Him whom she has offended. The other is a guilt of *debt* to be paid to the Justice of God. For by offending God man indulged his own self at the expense of the Divine Law; he deprived his Maker of that allegiance which, as a servant, he was bound to give Him; and this act of flagrant injustice constitutes a real debt towards God, to be atoned for by a punishment, either self-imposed or coming from without.

This is typified in the Book of Apocalypse, where the sinner, as an unclean and loathsome being, and a figure of fallen Babylon, is represented as having "become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird;"<sup>1</sup> and next is sentenced to suffer according to the grievousness of his sin. "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."<sup>2</sup>

3. Hence it follows that when a sinner wishes to be restored to the grace and friendship of God, it is not enough for him to propose to himself a change of life, and actually to avoid sin and its occasions. He must also feel an inward sorrow

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. xviii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 7.

for his past sins, and foster a sincere hatred and detestation of his wicked life; in short, to use the word consecrated by the Church, he must have contrition.

The blending together of these two elements—sorrow for the past, and resolution for the future—is beautifully illustrated in the definition which the Council of Trent gives us of contrition: “A sorrow of the soul, and a detestation of sin committed, with a firm resolve not to sin again.”<sup>1</sup>

Of these two elements, the principal is the former, the latter necessarily follows therefrom; for it cannot be that a man is truly sorry for his sin, if at the same time he entertain a secret purpose of committing it again.

The Lord impressed on His people the necessity of this inward sorrow. “Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God.”<sup>2</sup> This same sentiment of deep genuine sorrow made the holy King David break forth into this mournful protest, “To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee.”<sup>3</sup> This kings Ezechias<sup>4</sup> and Manasses<sup>5</sup> understood, when they humbled themselves and did penance for their past transgressions. Thus the men of Ninive at the preaching of Jonas “proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from

<sup>1</sup> Sess. xiv. c. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Joel ii. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. l. 6.

<sup>4</sup> II. Par. xxxii. 26.

<sup>5</sup> II. Par. xxxiii. 12.

the greatest to the least, and the king rose up out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed with sackcloth and sat in ashes; and neither men nor beasts, oxen nor sheep, tasted anything.”<sup>1</sup> And in the new law St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Mary Magdalene, Zacheus, the Prodigal Son, and others without number, bear testimony by their own conduct to this great Law of Penance.

The great Doctor of Milan, St. Ambrose, has beautiful words on the subject. “It has been easier for me,” he writes, “to find men who have preserved their innocence, than sinners who have performed a suitable penance. To court human dignities, to impose on ourselves no restraint in the use of wine, in the enjoyment of the pleasures of nature, is this true penance? We must renounce the world, indulge in sleep less than nature demands; we must break it by our groanings, interrupt it by our sighs, spend it in prayer; we must so live as if we were dying to the use of this life. Let man deny himself, and let him be utterly changed. Even as that young man of whom it is related, that after he had yielded to an unlawful affection, he set out for a far country, and when he had rooted out every germ of vicious inclination from his heart, he came back. One day he met the person who had been the object of his unlawful love. She wondered why he did not address her. Thinking this was because he did not recognise her,

<sup>1</sup> Jon. iii. 5-7.



she stepped forward: 'It is I,' said she—but I,' he answered, 'am no longer I.'"<sup>1</sup>

4. Luther, when first he began to fall away from the Catholic Church, took it upon himself to impugn this doctrine. He eliminated from contrition and penance everything savouring of sorrow, of sadness, of bitterness. True contrition, he said, can be found without these; the best of penances is a new life, *optima pœnitentia nova vita*; the rest only serves to make a man a hypocrite and a greater sinner; we must rather be intent on loving justice than on hating sin; nay, our only preoccupation must be how to act for the future.<sup>2</sup>

In truth, it might have been asked of Luther, what our Lord in His Passion asked of Pilate, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?"<sup>3</sup> For, Lawrence Valla<sup>4</sup> and Eras-

<sup>1</sup> "Facilius inveni qui innocentiam servaverint quam qui congrue egerint pœnitentiam. An quisquam illam pœnitentiam putat, ubi acquirendæ ambitio dignitatis, ubi vini effusio, ubi copulæ conjugalis usus? Renuntiandum seculo est, somno ipsi minus indulgendum, quam natura postulat, interpellandus est gemitibus, interrumpendus est suspiriis, sequestrandus orationibus; vivendum ita, ut vitali huic moriamur usui. Seipsum sibi homo abneget et totus mutetur: sicut quemdam adolescentem fabulæ ferunt post amores meretricios peregre profectum et amore abolito regressum, veteri postea occurrisse dilectæ, quæ ubi non interpellatam mirata, putaverit non recognitam, rursus occurrens dixerit: ego sum, responderit ille: sed ego, non sum ego."—Lib. II. de Pœnit., c. 10.

<sup>2</sup> See Luther's Sermon de Pœnitentia, and the resolutions of his propositions.

<sup>3</sup> John xviii. 34.

<sup>4</sup> In his notes on the seventh chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians.

mus,<sup>1</sup> who, each in his own way, might be called the harbingers of the Protestant Reformation, had already, with a great apparatus of Greek and Hebrew erudition, put forth the opinion that sorrow for the past is not an essential requisite for penance. In the course of time, Theodore Beza<sup>2</sup> adopted this interpretation, and styled the contrary doctrine a prejudice of illiterate minds.

According to these men, therefore, grammarians rather than theologians, as Cardinal Bellarmine calls them, the word *pænitentia* should be used rather to signify a love of justice than a hatred of sin; it implies no sense of regret or bitterness, for the fulfilment of it is anything but difficult, unpleasant, and painful. Hence, in the use of Scripture, the word *pænitentia* does not mean sorrow, but a change of the mind, a mere purpose for the future, *μετάνοια*,<sup>3</sup> a bare resolve, rather than the laborious exercise of penance. Thus did the Reformers argue when they first set themselves "to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy," trusting that they would afterwards, with the same facility, be able "to build and to plant."<sup>4</sup>

But Luther himself, as it appears from his subsequent writings, and notably from the articles drawn

<sup>1</sup> In his notes on the third chapter of St. Matthew.

<sup>2</sup> In his commentaries on the third chapter of St. Matthew.

<sup>3</sup> See Luther's letter to John Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the Augustinian Order, written by him in 1518, and inserted in the first volume of his works printed at Wittenberg.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. i. 10.

up at Smalkalde, soon found himself in the necessity of abandoning a doctrine of which he could hardly be convinced, and which the law of nature openly contradicted. In later years he dropped his new-fangled teaching on this point, and acknowledged with the Church the usefulness and necessity of true penance for the past.

5. At the risk that our remarks may be taken as "the censures of ill-meaning and discontented persons," we can hardly here forbear expressing some doubts as to whether this doctrine was not the principle which guided, in 1604, the fifty-four men chosen by James I. for a revision of the English Bible. That for the hundreds of times that the Vulgate has the word *pœnitentia*, the Protestant version should never have the corresponding term *penance*, suggests the possibility that such an omission may not have been altogether accidental.

The word נִחַם, *nahham*, for which the Vulgate has *pœnitere*, means precisely a change of the mind, accompanied with sorrow and displeasure for the past and a disapproval thereof, manifested by sighs and groanings. The Greek μεταμέλῃσθαι is used in the same sense; whilst, concerning the word μετάνοια, which seems to have been the stronghold of Erasmus and of his disciples, Lactantius says that it signifies indeed a repentance, *resipiscentiam*, but that those truly repent who are sorry for their faults and chastise themselves for their foolishness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L. vi. div. Inst., c. xxiv.

The translators, then, persistently discard the word *penance* to mean this action, and repeatedly prefer the word *repentance*. More is suggested than expressed in this preference. It is true that both words have now come to mean very nearly the same; yet, viewed in opposition with each other, the word *repentance* may be taken as meaning simply a turning of the mind, an *after-counsel*, as Erasmus called it, stripped of every sense of unpleasant and bitter memory, and exempt from the hardship which *penance* necessarily involves.

But then, if *repentance* need not be associated with suffering, either self-inflicted or imposed by a higher avenging power; and if, on the contrary, the ordinary appendants of *penance* are toilsome labour and smarting pain, why should the word *repentance*, rather than *penance*, be used in connection with painful exercises, such as are oftentimes mentioned in Holy Scripture?

One instance or two, taken at random out of a hundred, will suffice for our purpose. Where the Vulgate has "Idcirco, ipse me reprehendo, et ago pœnitentiam—נִחַמְתִּי—in favilla et cinere,"<sup>1</sup> the Protestant version has "Wherefore I abhor myself and *repent* in dust and ashes." If dust and ashes were, among the Jews, the ordinary associates and the outward emblems of sorrow, and *repentance* means only a turning of the mind, was it not obvious to say, as

<sup>1</sup> Job xlii. 6.

the Catholic version has it, "I reprehend myself and *do penance* in dust and ashes?"

Likewise in Jeremias<sup>1</sup> the text of the Vulgate, "Postquam enim convertisti me, egi pœnitentiam—נִחַמְתִּי," is well rendered by the Douay version, "After Thou didst convert me, I did penance;" for it is natural that penance for the past should follow conversion; that he who truly repents, looking back with bitterness on the evil he has done, should wish it not to be. But to say, as the Protestant version has it, "Surely after that I was converted, I repented," is, to say the least, a flagrant impropriety; it is the case of him who begins the building of his house by the roof.<sup>2</sup>

6. Now, to come back to our subject, if the sinner, on his returning to God by contrition, elicits an act of inward penitential sorrow, equivalent in intensity to the degree of the malice of his sin, he, together with the grace and friendship of God, which is the immediate fruit of contrition, obtains a perfect remission of the punishment due to his sin; in a word, he is quits with God, not so much, indeed, on account

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> That penance regards the past rather than the future is amply proved by Tertullian in the second Book against Marcion and in his book *De Pœnit.*, and by Aristotle in the third Book on Ethics, chap. i. The celebrated Latin poet of the fourth century, Ausonius, the master and friend of St. Paulinus, in his epigram *De Occasione et Pœnitentia*, feigns *μετάνοια* to be an avenging goddess:—

"Sum dea, quæ facti non factique exigo pœnas :  
Nempe ut pœniteat, sic Metanæa vocor."

See Cardinal Bellarmine, *De Pœnitentia*, l. i. c. 7. Also the important notes on Matt. iii. 1, 2, in the New Testament of Rheims, published by George Henry & Co., London.



of what his sorrow is in itself, as on account of the Divine acceptance of the same.

But if the inward sorrow falls short of that degree of intensity, the *guilt of stain* is indeed removed from the sinner's soul; for the grace of God, which he has recovered, is incompatible with the loathsome stain that sin had inflicted, and with the separation from the Source of all good. But there still remains some debt to be paid to the Justice of God in the shape of temporal punishment or of penitential exercise; for the "penance," says St. Cyprian, "must not be inferior to the crime committed."<sup>1</sup>

We have clear instances of this truth in Holy Writ. Adam and Eve, after their expulsion from Paradise, had, according to the opinion of the Fathers, obtained from God, by sincere contrition, the pardon of their sins; yet they and their posterity remained subject to a large number of temporal punishments and physical failings—the darkness of the intellect, the depravity of the heart, the weakening of the will, and, above all, the expectation of an uncertain yet inevitable death. Likewise when God, appeased by Moses's supplication, forgave the people the crime of idolatry which they had committed against Him in the desert, He, notwithstanding, threatened them that a day of revenge would come when He would visit their sin.<sup>2</sup> And when they murmured in the desert and God threatened to destroy them, and Moses interposed his supplication,

<sup>1</sup> In the 5th Sermon de Lapsis.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxii. 34.



the Lord said, "I have forgiven according to Thy word, as I live, and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. But yet all the men that have seen My majesty, and the signs that I have done in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now ten times, and have not obeyed My Voice, shall not see the land, for which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any one of them that hath detracted Me behold it."<sup>1</sup>

A more conclusive proof that a debt of temporal punishment often remains to be paid to the Justice of God after the sin has been remitted, is afforded us in the history of David. The Lord, by the mouth of the Prophet Nathan, had declared unto the repentant king that his sin had been taken away; but this did not dispense him from performing a heavy penance in fasting and sackcloth, from "labouring in his groanings, every night washing his bed, watering his couch with his tears,"<sup>2</sup> and from earnestly entreating God to "wash him yet more from his iniquity, and cleanse him from his sin;"<sup>3</sup> which made St. Augustine exclaim, "O Lord, Thou leavest not without punishment the sins of those very ones to whom Thou hadst forgiven them."<sup>4</sup>

Calvin himself could not deny that this had been the faith of the Church for many centuries past. Yet he did not shrink from the bold assertion that almost all the ancient authors whose works we possess were

<sup>1</sup> Num. xiv. 20-23.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. l. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Enarr. in Ps. l. n. 11.

mistaken in this respect, and that their language was prompted by extreme severity.<sup>1</sup> The holy Council of Trent set forth the Catholic doctrine on this point, when it declared it altogether false and contrary to the Word of God, to say that the guilt is never forgiven by God unless the whole punishment be remitted.<sup>2</sup>

But what further proof need we seek of a truth which lies at the very basis of social relations? The natural law which binds man to his neighbour prescribes that, when a man has offended his fellow-man, no reconciliation can take place except on condition that the offender offers to him whom he has offended a compensation proportionate to the grievousness of the offence. How much more, then, should man offer to God, besides the sorrow of his heart, a due compensation for the offence he has given to His Divine Majesty?

7. On the other hand, whenever we perform a good work in the state of grace, to say nothing of the power of impetration such a work possesses, we derive therefrom a twofold advantage: first, our essential merit is increased, and consequently our claim to the retribution of eternal glory. It is this which marks the different degrees of sanctity in this life, and by which "star differeth from star in glory"<sup>3</sup> in the next.

<sup>1</sup> Inst. l. iii. c. 4, n. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Sessio xiv. c. viii.; cf. can. xii. and xv. See also Sess. vi. can. 30.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 4.

But besides that, our good works possess another efficacy, that of satisfaction, by which we can atone for the temporal debt of our sins. For the performance of every good work involves a certain amount of hardship, of difficulty, and consequently of self-denial; and this, when borne for God, is accounted by Him as a compensation for past sins.

The merit belongs properly and exclusively to the performer of these good works. It is inalienable. It constitutes the reward due to each man, and "every man," says St. Paul, "shall receive his own reward according to his own labours."<sup>1</sup> But the satisfaction may be made over to another. Indeed, it is in this that satisfaction differs from the other parts of penance, that it can be transferred by us to our neighbour. "No man may be contrite, or confess for another," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent;<sup>2</sup> "but those who are endowed with Divine grace may pay for one another what is due to God, and so they seem in some sort to bear each other's burden."<sup>3</sup>

This is a point on which no room is left for doubt. It is a mere consequence of that article in the Apostles' Creed by which we profess to believe in "the communion of saints." "Regenerated as we all are to Christ, by having been washed in the same Baptism, made partakers of the same Sacraments, and especially refreshed by the same meat and drink—the Body and Blood of Christ our Lord—we are all

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Part II. cap. v. quæst. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. vi. 2.

manifestly members of the same body. As then the foot does not perform its function solely for its own benefit, but also for that of the eyes, nor again do the eyes see only for themselves, but for the common benefit of all the members, so ought works of satisfaction to be deemed common amongst us.”<sup>1</sup>

8. Now, in the application of these satisfactions, a threefold case may happen.

Sometimes the amount of satisfaction we go through is not sufficient to cover the whole of our debt, and there remains a surplus to be paid to the justice of God. This, we fear, is the case with many a Christian. The faults committed are many, and the good performed scanty and imperfect—too light to counterbalance God’s rigorous Justice.

Sometimes the good work is just enough to cover our debt. Such is, of itself, Baptism, and religious profession, of which ascetic writers say that it is so agreeable to God as to be accounted by Him as a second Baptism. Such also is the act of martyrdom, which, proceeding as it does from the perfect love of God, makes up for every obligation to punishment.

But let us suppose, as a third case, that a man has never lost his baptismal innocence, and yet that he has for many years, like St. Paul the Hermit, persevered in a life of the greatest austerity, what a store of satisfactory merits must such a one have laid by, after he has duly atoned for the few slips and imperfections inseparable from human nature !

<sup>1</sup> Cat. Rom., Part II. c. v. q. 76.

Of some holy anchorites St. John Climacus relates that he saw them in a monastery called the Prison of Penitents, standing upright in the open air, thus trying to overcome sleep. Others he saw with their eyes continually fixed on heaven, asking God with many tears to have pity on them. Others, on the contrary, with their hands tied behind their backs, kept their head bent towards the ground, as if unworthy to look upwards. Others, again, would sit on ashes, with their head between their knees, and strike the ground with their forehead; while others, like St. Simon Stylites, would stand for years on a column, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather—voluntary victims for sins which they knew not.

We have no lack of similar examples of austere penance in more modern times. For thirty-three years St. Alexis Falconieri had led in Florence, amid the corruption of the thirteenth century, a life of spotless innocence and of sublime virtue, mixed with the practice of every kind of mortification. Then, in compliance with the behests of the Queen of Heaven, he retired, with his six companions, into solitude, and finally embraced with them the religious life. In this holy state he lived for fully seventy-seven years; and all this time, as his biographers relate, was spent in the practice of incessant prayer, of continual fasts, of austere mortifications, of painful humiliations, of disinterested charity. What an amount of superabundant satisfactions must this

meek Servite saint have gained during those hundred and ten years of his life !

These men were they whom St. Paul describes as having had "trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted."<sup>1</sup> And yet they could say with St. Paul, "I am not conscious to myself of anything;"<sup>2</sup> and again, "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world."<sup>3</sup>

With how much truth, then, could they say these words of Job, "O that my sins, whereby I have deserved wrath and the calamity that I suffer, were weighed in a balance ! As the sand of the sea this would appear heavier."<sup>4</sup>

But there is yet more. What must have been the superabundant satisfactions of the Blessed Virgin Mary ! She had been conceived, as faith teaches us, in original justice. Accordingly she had never experienced that tendency to sin, on which depends the greatest struggle of our lives, and which prompts us to neglect the law of God. And so, as the holy Council of Trent teaches us,<sup>5</sup> never did the faintest shadow of imperfection tarnish the brightness of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 36, 37.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Job vi. 2, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Sess. vi. de Justif., c. 25.



grace in her soul. And yet, on the other hand, what an ordeal of sufferings had she not to go through all her life long! What anguish, what heart-rending agony when—

“ By the Cross of Jesus dying  
 Stood the mournful Mother crying,  
 While her Son was hanging there ! ”

What a store both of merits and satisfactions must she have possessed, when, by her Divine Son, she was bidden make for the heavenly country, to be crowned by Him Sovereign Queen of the whole world! Did ever queen present her spouse with such a rich dowry?

9. But there is One who toiled and suffered even more than the Queen of Martyrs, “ a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity, who surely hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows, and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.”<sup>1</sup> And yet He was all holiness and purity, “ the Holy One of God,”<sup>2</sup> who “ did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth ; ”<sup>3</sup> “ a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily, as the other priests, to offer sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the people’s.”<sup>4</sup> What an amount of satisfactions—infinite satisfactions, for He was truly God—must He have accumulated who suffered so great torments!

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 21.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter ii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. vii. 26, 27.

10. Now, what has become of these superabundant satisfactions of Christ, of His Blessed Mother, and of the saints? Shall we dare assert that they are void of practical utility, and that they have no sensible effect, beyond that of teaching us how much Christ and His saints have been able to bear, when placed in the crucible of sorrow? Such an assertion would be injurious to God's Wisdom and to our sense of His Justice.

To His Wisdom, because it would be absurd to say that, when He submitted His own Beloved Son and His dear saints to such torments, He had nothing else in view, than to exhibit a sterile spectacle of their patience and of their strength, such as amused the Roman emperors in the savage combats of gladiators, or again, such as interested the pagan divinities, when they watched, from the height of Olympus, Hercules in the midst of his labours.

And no less would it offend our sense of God's Justice to say that these merits have no practical application. For we have this innate persuasion, that He is so just, as never to allow any merit, any good whatever to be performed by men, without directing it to some actual profit, whether to ourselves or to those allied to us by ties of friendship, relationship, or duty.

And yet we must of necessity say that these satisfactions will be deprived of actual and practical usefulness, unless they are given over to such as may benefit by them. Coffers of gold, while lying

buried in the cellars of an Indian prince, may indeed rouse the admiration and foment the cupidity of a covetous miser, but are of no profit whatever to any one, until they are extracted therefrom, and used in trade, for the purchase of commodities, for public works, for building churches, or else judiciously distributed to those in need. In like manner, the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and of His saints will be utterly fruitless, if they are not actually drawn from the treasury of the Church, and used to further the interests of the Christian commonwealth, or to supply the deficiency of the poorer members of Christ.

II. There is in the Apostles' Creed one article which supplies an appropriate answer to objectors. We have already mentioned the communion of saints. In this article we are commanded to believe that there is, in the Church, a link which binds Christians together, which gives them an identity of interests, and entitles them to a communion of goods, such as exists between the members of one and the same family. A family is enriched with the goods of the individual members; and again, the members are benefited by the goods of the family, and one helps another by the transfer of his alienable goods.

So is there in the Church an interchange of supernatural goods. It consists not in sympathies only, not in mutual edification only, not in pouring forth prayers and supplications for one another only, but in a real and vital influence of one member upon

another, and of the whole body upon each member, as we have heard from the Council of Trent.<sup>1</sup>

For the Church is exhibited to us in Holy Scripture as a living body, which from the Head, Christ, "being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation, in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity."<sup>2</sup>

So, interpreting the Apostle's mind, we may say that as the substantial union of a human body requires that all the members should be closely joined together, should exercise on one another a vital influence, consisting in a mutual communication of blood and strength, and finally that their growth should result in the growth of the whole body; so, in virtue of the communion of the Church, the faithful who are its members, "called the saints,"<sup>3</sup> should be closely bound by the unity of their faith, should help and benefit one another by the participation of their goods, and the whole should ultimately redound unto "the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the Body of Christ in charity."<sup>4</sup>

This close union and interdependence it is which constitutes a joint liability among the members, in virtue of which the good and the evil which is done by some is imputed in some measure to the others.

Thus have Christian communities often been saved by reason of some living saint, unknown to men, but

<sup>1</sup> See page 15.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 12.

known to God ; as of old Putiphar's house was the object of abundant blessings from God because of the holy and humble Joseph. On the other hand, how often has it not happened that the whole Body of Christ has been made to smart keenly under the blows of persecutors, for some faults which but a few wayward members have committed, but for which all are in some measure answerable !

12. Peter de Blois, an ecclesiastical writer of the twelfth century (*d.* about 1200), in the letter which he wrote to the Abbot and Monastery of Chichester, speaks in most impressive terms of the communion of saints. The purport of the writer's letter is to entreat the monks to pour forth fervent prayers to God for himself, as he was soon to receive the sacerdotal dignity.

"Indeed, we are all one thing in Christ," he says, "and the entirety of the Church, which consists of a uniform connection of the members, enjoins upon all the rule of mutual communion and the undivided affection of charity. I, therefore, entreat you in the oneness of faith, in the communion of the saints, and in the confession of one baptism, that 'the eyes' of your charity 'may see my imperfect being,'<sup>1</sup> and that, by your prayers, you may prop up a weak man, whom the greatness of the burden frightens.

"With Christ, that which to one is a cause of proficiency is never to another a cause of deficiency; for grace increases by being overspent, and the cruse of

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxxviii. 16.

oil so much the more exuberantly overflows, as charity, the mother of virtues, pours out more abundantly therefrom into the vessels which are presented.<sup>1</sup> Your prayer, therefore, never falls fruitless on the ground, because, though it may not be profitable to him for whom it is made, at least it goes back into the bosom of him who has prayed.”<sup>2</sup>

13. This communion, be it noted, does not only exist within the limits of the Church militant: it comprehends also the members both of the triumphant and of the suffering Church. The saints above look down from their place of unchangeable bliss upon their brethren, who are still exposed to the assaults of the enemy and fighting for their lives; and the faithful upon earth look down with pitiful eyes upon the holy souls in Purgatory, who indeed have come out victorious from the final combat, but who have still to expiate, in the midst of bitter torments, a debt to God's justice.

The blessed in heaven are rich beyond their requirements, and out of the superabundance of their

<sup>1</sup> Allusion to 4 Kings v.

<sup>2</sup> “Sane in Christo omnes unum sumus, et ex uniformi connexionione membrorum Ecclesiæ consistens integritas indicit omnibus mutuæ communionis regulam, et indivisos charitatis affectus. Adjuro itaque vos in unitate fidei, in sanctorum communionem et in unius confessionem baptismi, ut imperfectum meum videant oculi charitatis vestræ, et orationibus vestris supportetis infirmum, quem oneris magnitudo deterret. Apud Christum nunquam alicui deficit quod per eum alii proficit. Crescit enim gratia ex impendio, et lecythus olei tanto plenius exuberat, quanto copiosius ex ipso mater virtutum charitas vasis quæ offeruntur infundit. Vestra igitur oratio nunquam in terram vacua cadit; quia, etsi non prosperatur ei pro quo mittitur, saltem in sinum revertitur supplicantis.”—Ep. 139.



merits, they supply our deficiency. On the other hand, the souls of many among the departed, though certainly saved, and thus placed in a far better condition than our own, are helplessly held captives in the cleansing flames of Purgatory; and we, like holy Tobias with regard to our brethren in captivity, reckon it a sweet duty to relieve, by our charities, the wants of our more suffering, yet holier and more secure brethren.

“What a grand picture is that immense city with its threefold order of spirits always in relation with each other! The combatant world reaches out one hand to the suffering world, and with the other lays hold of the hand of the world triumphant. Thanks-giving, prayer, satisfactions, help, inspiration, faith, hope, and love circulate from one to the other as so many beneficial rivers. Nothing is isolated, and the spirits, like the metal sheets of a magnetised bundle, enjoy their proper forces and those of all the others.”<sup>1</sup>

14. But this communion does not take place, save on a twofold condition—that the members should be united by the bonds of charity, and that they should have known suffering.

Of all the mysteries with which human life is encompassed, there is none of so wide a range, none so difficult of practical solution, as the mystery of suffering. It embraces mankind at large, the good and the bad, the rich and the poor. Each returning tide of human generations brings with

<sup>1</sup> Comte J. de Maistre, *Soirées de St. Pétersbourg*, t. ii. 10 Entretien.

it fresh sufferings. No age, no condition, no state of life, is sufficient to exempt man from sorrow. It takes hold of the child at its cradle, and does not leave it, but at its departure from this world. We may have lived but a few years as yet ; but if, at our birth, we had been given to foresee the suffering that we have already gone through, perhaps the heart would have failed us at the sight, and we would have said with holy Job, " Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said : A man-child is conceived." <sup>1</sup>

But why should we be made to suffer ? Why should our longings after happiness be ever made void, our hopes blasted, our schemes frustrated ? Why, in all and each of our works should we ever be a prey to sorrow and affliction ? In a word, why should suffering be the burden of our life ?

Those who will not acknowledge in the world anything but matter, say that suffering is a tribute exacted by nature, or the sheer effect of chance. But nature can claim no superiority over man, that man should be its tributary ; and chance is but an empty word. In very deed, the platonic reveries of self-styled " Philosophers " have never succeeded in soothing a pain, in healing a wound, in comforting a broken heart.

Yet suffering was not brought into the world by God. He is essentially good, and cannot be the direct cause of evil. Suffering is an evil, and as

<sup>1</sup> Job iii. 3.

such could only be caused by that which is intrinsically evil. This is sin; and so suffering was brought into the world by sin, and God, who allowed sin, willed that it should bring with it its natural consequence—suffering.

This, then, is the origin of suffering. But there is yet another mystery concealed in the working of suffering. To what end has God willed the introduction of suffering in the world? What is the object of suffering? It is to restore the order of God's offended Justice. The sinner refused God that allegiance which, as His servant, he owed Him, and now he is made to compensate his felony by smarting keenly. And so, whilst he refused to serve God willingly, he is made to serve Him forcibly. And God remains the Great God.

But the mystery is not unfolded yet. The angels sinned and suffered, and God's Justice was satisfied. But this was all. Man sinned, suffered, satisfied God's Justice, and further drew down from heaven upon himself, through suffering, the graces by which he is restored to his first noble condition. And so, whilst in the case of the sinful angels, suffering had no other end but that of making amends to God's Justice, of being a mere satisfaction, in man's case it has a twofold end, for it is both a payment to His *Justice* and a means to draw down His *Mercy*. In the case of the angels, "God's Justice is justice for ever;"<sup>1</sup> in the case of man, "mercy and truth

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii. 142.

have met each other, justice and peace have kissed.”<sup>1</sup>

This law is of universal application. As there is no atonement for man’s sins except through suffering, so is there no plea for mercy but that which is based upon sorrow.

Hence, “Christ, the faithful Witness, the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth,”<sup>2</sup> would not be exempted from that law. “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things.”<sup>3</sup>

But there is yet more contained in the mystery of suffering. Suffering bears a proportion to the restoration of God’s Justice and Mercy. By how much the greater the sufferings, by so much the more complete is this restoration. Hence, Christ, “who was made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption,”<sup>4</sup> must needs have been “the Man of Sorrows.”<sup>5</sup>

And, of all the creatures of God, the one that was most closely associated to Christ in the work which He had undertaken of appeasing God’s Justice and drawing down upon earth His Mercy, was the Blessed Virgin Mary, because of all creatures she was most to suffer. So that, as by *His* Passion Jesus atoned for our sins with regard to God’s Justice, so Mary, by *her* compassion, worked with Him towards the same end; and as the Humanity of

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. i. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Marc. viii. 31.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. liii. 3.

Jesus was the most beautiful and stupendous work of God's *Mercy*—"We saw Him full of grace and truth,"<sup>1</sup>—so was Mary, of all mere creatures, the most fair and the most perfect—"full of grace"<sup>2</sup> too, in her own line, and this because she suffered, less indeed than her Son, yet more than any other creature.

Now, what the relations of Jesus and Mary were to suffering, such also are the relations of each one of us. For "those that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."<sup>3</sup> There is, however, this difference, that Jesus and Mary, by suffering, did not atone for their own sins, for they were both equally sinless, though through different causes; yet both, through suffering, merited from the Divine Mercy graces for themselves. Jesus through suffering entered into His glory;<sup>4</sup> Mary, through being the Queen of Martyrs, became the Queen of Angels.

This, then, is the twofold end of suffering—to give a due compensation to God's Justice, and to call down graces from His Divine Mercy; and these two things ultimately result in the destruction of sin and the glory of God.

At first the burthen of suffering sounds like a harsh, discordant, ungrateful melody. Yet it is accompanied with a most delicious harmony; its tone is calm and gentle, and none but attentive ears can

<sup>1</sup> John i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 26.



catch the sweetness of the music. And in permitting suffering and ordering it to our good, the Almighty is acting as a most skilful Artist. His work is a drawing, the lines of which appear at first sight rugged, disconnected, the effect of chance, rather than the outcome of thought. But only draw back and consider the whole design: there is a treasure of meaning disguised among the rough outlines.

Faith is the light which discloses to us the secrets of suffering. Reason alone is encompassed with a shroud of darkness about this mystery: it is the twilight of evening. Faith scatters thereon floods of purest light: it is the dawn of morning. "In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxix. 6.

## CHAPTER II

### MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."*—GAL. vi. 2.

#### TRUE NOTION OF AN INDULGENCE

Three ways in which satisfactions may be transferred—First case—Second case—The Church a political body—Third case—Conditions: lawful authority in him who grants it—A just motive for granting it—The lesson taught by these two conditions—State of grace in the penitent and fulfilment of the works—Probable condition—Indulgences for the dead—They are granted by way of suffrage only—Conditions for gaining them—What is an Indulgence, and what it is not—The scriptural meaning of the word Indulgence—Its origin in the Church.

I. WE have already seen that, when we offend God wilfully, we make ourselves liable to His Justice for a debt of punishment which contrition and absolution are not always sufficient to cancel; that, on the other hand, Christ and His saints have acquired by their superabundant sufferings a treasury of satisfactory merits, and that, in virtue of the communion of saints, these satisfactions may be transferred from one to another. Now, starting from these principles, which are grounded upon faith, let us examine in how many ways such a transfer or donation of satisfactory merits can take place within the Church.

We may consider three ways in which this transfer may take place. It may be made, first, by a private member of the Church ; secondly, by a limited community of faithful bound together by ties of a common profession, or by those of a common dwelling-place, such as the religious in a community or the faithful in a parish ; or, thirdly, this transfer may be made out of the treasury of the whole Church, by the authorised dispensers. We shall examine each of these cases, and see in which case this transfer may be called an Indulgence.

2. There can be no doubt that an individual may apply to another his own satisfactions. Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, by his writings on the first ages of the Church entitled to be called the father of ecclesiastical history, relates that the Apostle St. John had succeeded in bringing back to the fold of Christ a thief whose life for many years had been but a tissue of crimes, and who was despairing of finding mercy with God. St. John encouraged him, saying, “ Fear not, my son ; there is still left for thee a hope of salvation ; *for thee will I make satisfaction to Christ ; for thy sake will I gladly suffer death, even as Our Blessed Lord condescended to die for us all ; for thy soul will I lay down my own soul.*”<sup>1</sup> Thus was St. John in his charity handing over to that miserable sinner the satisfactions which he himself had acquired.

So, too, did the martyrs, when, from their prisons, whence they were soon to go forth and suffer

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Eccles., iii. 24.

death for Christ, they consigned by a solemn handwriting, though not yet sanctioned by the Church, to the humble suppliant that besought their intercession, their present and future sufferings, as a satisfaction for penances to which, according to the canons of the Church, he had made himself liable. But of this we shall have occasion to speak more fully later on. Thus, also, we read in the life of some modern saint, that when administering the Sacrament of Penance, he would, in some cases, impose but light penances on great sinners, promising them that he would supply the rest.

However, this kind of transfer, made by an individual member of the Church, and unwarranted by the endorsement of her pastors, is not what we call an Indulgence. For Indulgences are granted out of the treasury which, we said, is made up of the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and of His saints; whereas this concession originates from a private man's spiritual fund.

Consequently an Indulgence can only be granted by such as have received from Christ power over the Church, whilst this transfer is made on altogether private authority.

Moreover, it may be that the merits of that generous soul, however great they may chance to be, are not sufficient to discharge the whole debt of the sinner, while the treasury of the Church, out of which these satisfactions are taken, is more than sufficient to cover the debt of a thousand sinful worlds.

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Lastly, an Indulgence frees a man both from his debt with regard to God and from his debt with regard to the Church; but a private donation of satisfactory merits, however ample, if it have not the sanction of the Church, would not free a man from the obligation of undergoing the amount of public penance imposed on him for his sin by the ancient canons, supposing they were still in full vigour.

3. The second case in which a transfer of satisfactory merits may be made is, as was said above, when a limited body of faithful agree to make over, whether by common accord or by the organ of their immediate Superior, their joint satisfactions to a particular person. The case would be that of a group of pious persons agreeing to offer up certain penitential exercises for an individual, or of a Superior of a Religious Community, of an Order, of a parish, applying to a similar purpose the good works of those under him. Of this second kind of application instances are not wanting, and we have crops of them in Religious Orders, in which, by a decree of the Superior, the good works performed by all the Religious are sometimes communicated to special benefactors, as a reward for their charity.

But neither may this transfer or donation be called an Indulgence, and this precisely for the very reasons that were given in the first case, viz., because such a donation is not made out of the whole treasury of the Church, for it may be that the merits of that



body are not sufficient to cancel the whole debt of the sinner ; secondly, because this application would not liberate a man from undergoing the discipline of the Penitential Canons if they were still in full force ; and lastly, because this donation is not ratified by the authority of the Church.

This last reason opens the gate to an objection. Is not a religious Superior, an abbot, for instance, or a parish priest, a man with authority in the Church ? Does he not hold a hierarchical position, and has he not truly power over those whom it is his office to rule in spiritual matters ? And if so, how can it be said that a donation made by him is not ratified by the authority of the Church ?

The answer to this objection depends on a right understanding of the Constitution of the Church.

4. Speaking generally, there are two kinds of congregations or associations of men ; the one is economical, the other political. A gathering of individuals, whether bound by ties of blood, as in a family, or by bonds of religious or commercial interests, as in a Religious Order or in a company, constitutes an economical association. But a gathering of several such associations, bound by the ties of common interests, and by the sharing of the same nationality, constitutes a political association united under one government, and this we call a state.

Now the Catholic Church is a political body, a *state*. It is an assembly, not of individuals only, but of families, of villages, of towns, of pro-

vinces, of nations, bound for the same purpose, having a community of interests, obeying the same laws, ruled by one and the same Supreme Pastor. Indeed, it was the will of Jesus Christ that she should include in her bosom all the nations of the earth, for He said to His Apostles, "Go, teach ye all nations."<sup>1</sup> And this is the reason why the faithful are called "a holy nation, a purchased people, who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."<sup>2</sup>

If, then, the Church is a political association, a state, in the true sense of the word, its government also is that of a state, and its treasury a state treasury. Consequently, the custody and the administration of this treasury belong only to those, among the rulers of the Church, who are intrusted with a political or state authority, who are qualified public persons, and who are called truly and properly the *Prelates* of the Church.

Now these are the Bishops, and the Bishops only, to whom alone belongs a full power in the dispensation of the Sacraments, and who alone possess a native and full jurisdiction in the administration of ecclesiastical justice; who, under the "Prince of Pastors," have the mission of feeding the flock of God; who are to be made "a pattern of the flock from the heart;"<sup>3</sup> who are the successors of the apostles, the brothers of the Sovereign Pontiff; who are Christ's primary and ordinary "ambassa-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii, 9, 10.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Peter v. 2-4.

dors ;”<sup>1</sup> whose “daily instance is the solicitude for all the Churches ;”<sup>2</sup> and who are wedded to the Church, and to her interests, the symbol of which wedding they ever wear on their hand, the mystic ring which indissolubly binds them to Christ and to His Church.

But the inferior priests, apart from a special delegation, have no authority in the Church beyond the limits of their parish or the members of their congregation. The faithful subject to them form an economical body ; and even though honorific titles be sometimes conferred upon these priests, yet they are not properly the *Prelates* or Pastors of the Church. In the dispensation of Sacraments their power is circumscribed, for they derive it in a limited manner from the Bishop, whose diligence, watchfulness, and fatherly care they are destined as helpers and coadjutors to supply, wherever his action cannot reach. Hence, in their ordination, the Bishop says to them, “By how much the weaker and more infirm we are, by so much the more do we need such helpers.”<sup>3</sup>

When, therefore, a Superior of a Community or of a parish applies to a particular person the good works performed by its members, this is no Indulgence, not only because the good works of such persons are limited, but especially because such a Superior is not one of the first pastors, and conse-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Pontif. Rom. See St. Thomas Aquinas, Suppl. quæst. xxvi. a. 1.

quently no true prelate, no superior officer of the Church. He has no authority over the state treasury, out of which alone there is sufficiency of wealth, to remit, both in the sight of God and in the sight of the Church, the debt of an infinite number of sinful, but penitent souls.

5. When is it, then, that an Indulgence is granted? In the third and last case mentioned above, viz., when a donation or transfer is made over from the treasury of the Church by the qualified Prelates.

This is evident from what has been hitherto said. First, the donation must be made out of the whole treasury of the Church, because no private treasury can be sufficient to meet the liabilities of every sinner and cover the whole of his debt.

Secondly, it must be made by the qualified or first pastors of the Church, because they alone have authority over this treasury. There is yet another reason. In order that such a donation may be an Indulgence, it must be accepted by the Church as a compensation for that canonical penance to which the sinner was bound according to the ancient statutes. For, by his transgression the sinner has offended not God only, but the body also of which he is a wayward member. The whole offended body, then, has a right to exact satisfaction from the limb that has offended. So, in order that such an application out of the whole treasury of the Church, may in reality be an "Indulgence," it must be such that, in virtue of it, the

debt may be paid off, not only in the face of God—*in foro interno*—but also in the face of the Church—*in foro externo*—wherein the first pastors are ordinary judges.

6. But before we proceed any further, let us examine what are the conditions required for the validity of an Indulgence. These by theologians are reckoned to be three in number, viz., *lawful authority* in him who grants the Indulgence; *justness of the motive* for which it is granted; and *the proper dispositions* in him who receives it. The two first conditions regard the Superior who grants the Indulgence; the third, the faithful who wish to gain it.

There is in the Church a hierarchy of jurisdiction, which, springing from Christ, is continued in the variety of ministers who, from the Pope to the simple priest, represent His authority.

This hierarchy is based upon the principle that the sender communicates to him who is sent, in virtue of this lawful mission, that authority which enables the latter to continue the personality of the former, either wholly or partly, according as he has received from him who sends him the fulness of his authority, or only a portion of it. Without this, no man has power to bind or to loose; and did he presume to do so, his words would be but an empty sound, and his concessions sheer impostures.

The first person vested with this authority, and indeed of divine right, is the Sovereign Pontiff,



“the Key-bearer, the successor of Peter, and Vicar of Jesus Christ, who possesses the power of the Keys which opened the heavens.”<sup>1</sup> He is in the Church what a king is in his kingdom.<sup>2</sup> His power is not dependent upon man, but upon Christ alone, of whom he holds it. He, therefore, possesses a full power to bind and to loose, to forgive sins or to retain them, to remit the punishment due to sin, or to leave the sinner unabsolved.

This doctrine results from Holy Scripture, from the teaching of the Councils and of the Fathers, and from the constant use the Popes have made of such a power, for well-nigh nineteen centuries.

Next to the Pope, a General Council possesses this power, for it represents the Universal Church, with which Christ promised to remain until the consummation of the world.

The Bishops also can grant Indulgences, and indeed of divine right, because of divine right, as we have said, and not by the institution of the Church, they are the heads of their flocks, and are invested with ordinary jurisdiction, of which the power of granting Indulgences is a part.

It is, however, subordinate to the Pope's power, even as their authority, and this by the institution of Christ, who intrusted St. Peter with the care of feeding not only *His lambs*—that is, the faithful—but also *His sheep*<sup>3</sup>—that is, the pastors. “They

<sup>1</sup> Leo X. in his Decret. “Per Præsentes.”

<sup>2</sup> S. Thom. Supplem. q. xxvi. a. 3.

<sup>3</sup> John xxi. 17.

are assumed," says St. Thomas, "to share the Sovereign Pontiff's solicitude as judges appointed over each city: . . . therefore their power is taxed according to the ordinance of the Pope."<sup>1</sup> This is why, when some bishops had abused their power, the fourth Council of Lateran limited it to granting one year's Indulgence at the consecration of a church, and forty days on other occasions.<sup>2</sup>

And, as this power is a natural sequel of ordinary jurisdiction, it is evident that bishops who do not possess the latter cannot claim the former. Hence titular bishops, bishops who have resigned their See, Coadjutors, even with future succession, do not possess the power of granting Indulgences; and an ordinary bishop cannot exercise this right outside the territory of his diocese, except with regard to his own diocesan subjects.

The other inferior prelates, whatever be their dignity, have no native or ordinary power to grant Indulgences. For whereas a bishop is the governor of a whole people, like a Prefect in a province, and consequently possesses a natural authority over the common treasury, other prelates, as, for instance, a parish priest, an abbot, a general of an Order, are but like a father of a family wherein such a treasury does not exist. The same should be said of cardinals who are not bishops, and in general of

<sup>1</sup> Supplem. q. xxvi. a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Can. 62. This decree was inserted among the Decretals of Boniface VIII.

all prelates who are not invested with ordinary jurisdiction.

For this reason, Innocent. III., in the fourth Council of Lateran,<sup>1</sup> severely reproves certain abbots who, usurping the right of bishops, presumed to grant Indulgences. He strictly forbids them doing so for the future, except in the case of a special faculty or of a lawful custom.

The power of granting Indulgences belonging, as we have said, to jurisdiction, and not to order, it may be delegated to persons not invested with priestly character;<sup>2</sup> and indeed instances of such special commissions are not wanting in the Church.<sup>3</sup>

7. Besides the lawful power, it is also necessary that a superior, in granting an Indulgence, should have a just cause for so doing, and indeed a motive proportionate to the nature of the Indulgence granted.

For, as we have said above, the prelates of the Church are not the absolute masters, but only the dispensers of this spiritual treasury, and a dispenser cannot dispose of the goods of his master without reason. Moreover, Jesus Christ has given this power to His ministers for the edification of His Church, not for her destruction; now an injudicious and irrational use thereof would prove a grievous detriment to the faithful, by fomenting their indolence or their

<sup>1</sup> Can. 60, inserted in the *Corpus Juris*, c. 12, de excessibus præl.

<sup>2</sup> S. Thom. Supplem. q. xxvi. a. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. gr. ex Tabulario Cassinensi, Charta ann. 1299. See Du Cange at the word "Indulgentia."

spirit of impenitence, or inspiring them with a contempt for the Keys of the Church.

It is indeed far from the mind of the Church, when granting Indulgences, to foment idleness on the part of sinners, or to dispense them from the obligation of the divine precept of Penance. She only means to supply that which, through human weakness, they are not able to perform, and thus to help them in paying off, by this means, the debt which they cannot discharge by themselves.

This is often inculcated by the Sovereign Pontiffs in their Bulls. For, as a necessary condition, they require that the penitent should be truly contrite, which words indicate a serious detestation at least of grievous faults, with a firm resolution of not falling again, and a sincere will of satisfying Divine Justice as far as he can. The absence of such a motive would invalidate, either totally or in part, the Indulgence granted—totally, if no reason whatever should exist; in part, if the reason were not proportionate to the extent of the Indulgence.

But here a twofold remark is necessary. The first, that the Church herself is the best judge in this matter, having with her the assistance of the Holy Spirit: wherefore it would be rashness and presumption for a private person to charge her with injudicious dispensation.

The second, that we must not judge of the importance of a cause which determines the Church to grant an Indulgence from the particular persons

to whom it is granted, or from the good works enjoined considered in themselves; but from the common good that she has in view, such as the glory of God, the edification of the faithful, the increase of devotion among them, the defence of the Church, the salvation of our neighbour, &c. Hence a rich person may be entitled to a greater Indulgence for having given a small alms, than for having fasted a whole year; not because it was more difficult for him to give that alms than to fast, but because that small coin, given for the above purposes, contributes more to the glory of God, than a year's fasting on bread and water.

What this motive should be, it is not easy to determine *a priori*. The learned Father Lainez says that "the interior reformation and the peace of the Church are important motives for granting a plenary Indulgence, because they contribute very much to the glory of God and to the good of the Church. Consequently, everything which efficaciously favours this reformation suffices for granting an Indulgence; for instance, the frequent use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, the zeal for prayer and mortification, pious and long pilgrimages. . . .

"Actions even small in themselves," he adds, "but united with others more important, or connected with them, may suffice; for instance, the visit to the Basilica of St. Peter during the Jubilee year, the reception of the Papal blessing at Easter.



For although these actions taken singly be very little painful, yet those who perform them profess thereby publicly the unity of the Church under one pastor, and this unity strengthens the bond of charity and obedience, and procures the greater glory of God and the greater good of the Church; wherefore to those actions plenary Indulgences may be granted.”<sup>1</sup>

If this just reason be necessary when it is a question of granting Indulgences to living persons who are subject to the tribunal of the Church, much more so will it be required in the concession of Indulgences for the faithful departed, who belong only to the tribunal of God. Hence St. Thomas says: “The Prelate cannot grant as much Indulgence to the dead as he wishes, but only as much as the cause or reason will allow.”<sup>2</sup>

8. These, then, are the two conditions required on the Superior’s part for the validity of an Indulgence.

The necessity of authority sets forth the high dignity of the invisible head of the Church, Christ Himself, from whom all power on earth and in heaven depends, and accustoms the faithful more and more to recognise, with the eyes of supernatural faith, the Son of God in the person of His representative. The pastors, too, are thereby reminded of the necessity of union with Christ and His Vicar, for fear lest, being cut off from the tree of life, their ministry

<sup>1</sup> Disp. Trid. ii. 111-117.

<sup>2</sup> 4 Dist. 45, q. 2.

should become a vain show and their power an empty pretence.

Again, from the fact that a just motive is required for the validity of Indulgences, the faithful as well as the pastors are reminded that the sufferings of Christ and of His saints are not to be rated at a low price; that the blood of the New Testament is not such as can be carelessly trodden upon, and that, if they wish it to be applied to themselves, they must first "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ"<sup>1</sup> in their own selves.

9. On the part of him who wishes to gain the Indulgence, besides an, at least, *general intention* to do so,<sup>2</sup> a twofold condition is required, and a third is added on the score of probability. It is *necessary* that the faithful should be in a state of grace, and should exactly fulfil all that is required. It is also *probably* required that they should endeavour to satisfy the Justice of God, as much as they are able by their own penitential works. We shall expound singly each of these heads.

The state of grace, then, is in the faithful a necessary condition for gaining an Indulgence. Indeed, to hope that God will remit us the temporal punishment due to our sins while we are His enemies, would be presumption no less absurd, than to expect from Him the pardon of our sins, whilst our will is attached to them and disposed to commit new ones. It would be the case of him who would expect special

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See *Raccolta*, Introd. p. xii.

favours from one whom he actually offends. Moreover, he who is in a state of mortal sin is liable to God for a debt of eternal punishment, besides that of temporal pain. How, then, can he hope that God will remit him the lesser debt unless the greater is forgiven?

However, most theologians, resting on the authority of St. Antoninus,<sup>1</sup> admit that it is sufficient for the acquisition of an Indulgence, that the last work prescribed by the Bull of concession be done in a state of grace, because it is then only that the Indulgence produces its effect. As to the previous actions, it is enough if they are done in a spirit of penance and of detachment from mortal sin. Attachment to one venial sin only is an impediment for gaining fully a plenary Indulgence. In fact, the punishment cannot be forgiven unless the guilt be remitted, and the guilt is not remitted for those sins, from which the sinner positively excludes contrition by attachment to them.

It is, moreover, necessary that the faithful exactly perform the works prescribed, each and all, otherwise no Indulgence whatever is gained. If, then, a person is not able to fulfil, for some cause or other, any one of the works assigned, he cannot gain the Indulgence. Thus children, who have not the age for fasting and receiving Holy Communion, cannot gain an Indulgence which is granted on those conditions, unless in the grant special provisions are made to the contrary.

<sup>1</sup> 1 P. tit. 10, c. 3, §§ 5 in fine.

Besides, it is necessary that every one should personally fulfil the works assigned, and it is not enough to do so by deputy.

We cannot too strongly recommend to the faithful an exact study of the conditions stated in the Bulls of the Sovereign Pontiffs for the acquisition of Indulgences, and a scrupulous observance of the same, if they wish not to be deceived in their expectations. It often happens that, through overlooking some of these conditions, the faithful are deprived of considerable Indulgences. This recommendation applies particularly to confraternities, the erection and regulations of which are not always in accordance with all the conditions prescribed. Great numbers of persons are thus often deprived of the Indulgences. Likewise it is to be deplored that books are sometimes circulated, bearing erroneous indications on this matter: too much care can never be spent over publications of this kind.

10. We have said above that some theologians require, moreover, on the part of the faithful, that he should endeavour to satisfy the justice of God as much as he is able to do so by his own works, otherwise these Indulgences are of no use to him. This is the opinion of Cajetan,<sup>1</sup> followed by Navarrus, Bellarmine, and others. His reason is that it would be unjust to pray a friend to satisfy for us if we could do so by ourselves. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> Tr. x. de Susc. Ind., q. 1. See what St. Thomas says on this subject, Quodl. ii. q. 8, a. 16.

in a well-governed state, public money is never employed to cancel the debts of those who, by their own means, are in a position to meet the claims of their creditors. Besides, the grant is usually made in favour of those who are *truly contrite*—*vere contritis*. Now, such as refuse to do penance by themselves, when able to do so, cannot be said to be truly contrite, since a necessary part of this contrition is the will of satisfying. Lastly, the Confessor is supposed to give the penitent a penance proportionate to his sins; if, therefore, the penitent accepts it, as indeed he should, then must he do what lies in his power to fulfil it, and so Indulgences will only supply that which he is not able to perform; but if he does not accept it, then certainly he is not worthy of pardon, and if the stain of his sin is not remitted him, much less is the pain, which, as we have said, is but an appendage to the stain of sin.

11. It may not be out of place to speak here of the Indulgences granted in favour of the souls in Purgatory.

It is a part of the Catholic doctrine, to believe that we can apply to the souls in Purgatory the Indulgences granted by the Church. Indeed, we are in communion with them, no less than with the saints in heaven; for, says St. Augustine, “the souls of the faithful departed are in no wise separated from the Church;”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> De Civ. Dei, l. xx. c. 9. Cf. Leo X. in his Decret. “Per Præsentēs,” addressed to Cardinal Cajetan when Apostolic Legate in Germany.



and as they help us by their prayers, so do we help them by our fasts, alms-deeds, the sacrifice of the Mass, and particularly by the application of Indulgences.<sup>1</sup>

So are we warned in Holy Writ that "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."<sup>2</sup> For "the just man shall fall seven times."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, "there shall not enter into heaven anything defiled."<sup>4</sup> It is, then, just that those souls, which have not fully paid their debt to the Justice of God, should have to be cleansed by the flames of Purgatory; and as they are our brethren, it is meet that we ourselves should contribute to pay off their debt, by applying to them the merits of Christ and of His saints.

This application is confirmed by the definition of the Church and the universal practice of many centuries. When the pseudo-Synod of Pistoia, in its eagerness to draw the Church to the Jansenistic notions of the seventeenth century, declared this transfer of Indulgences to the souls in Purgatory to be nothing but a mere *chimera*,<sup>5</sup> the Sovereign Pontiff Pius VI. styled this proposition *false, rash, offensive to pious ears, injurious to the Roman Pontiffs, and to the practice and sense of the Universal Church*.

Again, if this has been, for many centuries past,

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Trid., sess. xxv., Decr. de Purg.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xxiv. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Apoc. xxi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Macc. xii. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Prop. 42.

the practice and belief of the Universal Church, to contend about the lawfulness of such a practice and of such a belief, says St. Austin,<sup>1</sup> "*is nothing short of most insolent madness.*"

12. Yet, we should observe with St. Bonaventure,<sup>2</sup> that the souls in Purgatory are united to the Militant Church by the bonds of *charity*, not by the chains of true *subjection*. As soon as a soul departs this life, it ceases to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Church, and is submitted immediately to God's tribunal. Hence, the Church can pronounce on the faithful departed no juridical sentence, no formal judgment, no direct absolution: this God alone can now do. Yet, she can help them *by way of suffrage*, offering, or impetration; that is, she can draw from off her own treasury the merits of Christ, and offer them to God, praying Him to accept these suffrages in their behalf. And in this indirect manner, the Church helps the souls of her children that are detained in the flames of Purgatory.

As regards the power of the Keys of the Church, the intention of the donor, and the abundance of the merits of Christ and of His saints, an Indulgence applied to the souls in Purgatory should have the same effect as if it were applied to the faithful on earth. But with God's intention, on whom the application entirely depends, it is not so.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 54 (al. 118), n. 46: "Si quid tota per orbem frequentat Ecclesia quin ita faciendum sit disputare, insolentissimæ insanix est."

<sup>2</sup> In 4 Sent. d. 20, Part ii. a. 1, q. 5.

For, although we may have a confident trust that God will take into account our good wishes and supplications, yet He has not pledged Himself irrevocably to do so, at least in the measure which we ask; so that we cannot infallibly be certain that such a soul, for which we have, by fulfilling all the conditions, gained, for instance, a plenary Indulgence, is at once on equal terms with the Justice of God and ushered into Paradise. In fact, that should be said of Indulgences which the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences declared about the privilege annexed to some altars,<sup>1</sup> viz., that “in its real application it is a pardon, the measure of which corresponds to the good pleasure of Divine Mercy, and to His acceptance of the satisfaction which is offered to Him.”

And, if we may venture to fathom God's unsearchable ways, we may say that the fervour which that soul displayed during this mortal life, its eagerness to avail itself, then, of the Indulgences of the Church, and to succour other suffering souls, are motives which may move God to accept more readily the satisfactions which are offered for such a soul by the faithful on earth.

13. But, in order that this transfer may be valid, it is necessary, in the first place, that it should be authorised by an express declaration of the Sovereign Pontiff. As a matter of fact, most Indulgences are thus applicable.

Secondly, the donor should have the intention,

<sup>1</sup> 28th July 1840.

either actual or virtual, of making this transfer, because Indulgences being goods properly belonging to him, will not be applied to others, unless he have a will to do so. And in this case, the good works cease to be satisfactory for himself, for the satisfaction has been transferred to others, though the meritorious and impetratory value of them remains to him who has performed them.

Moreover, it is necessary that the works should be penal, otherwise they would have no proportion with the satisfaction, and so would be incapable of atoning for the penalty of sin.

Besides this, the greater part of theologians put it down as a condition, that he who performs the works should be in a state of grace, even as the state of grace is necessary for the living to gain an Indulgence. And the reason of this is, that the application of the satisfaction rests more in the personal merit of him who performs the good work, than in the value of the treasury out of which the satisfactions are drawn.

The case, therefore, is far different from what it is in the application of the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the prayers which are offered in the name of the Church by unworthy ministers. For, here, the virtue of satisfaction takes its origin, not in the personal merit of the immediate agent—that is, of the minister—but in the dignity of Him in whose name he prays or offers the Divine Sacrifice, in the same way in which the petition of a king takes its value not

from the merit of his ambassador, but from the majesty of the king himself, and the merit of alms from the intention of the master who gives them, not from that of the servant who distributes them. But in our case, the Indulgence being the application of the merits of Christ through the good works of man, unless the latter be in friendship with God, it would be almost presumptuous to expect from Him an actual application of these merits to the souls in Purgatory.

Yet other theologians hold that, although such works done in a state of mortal sin have no infallible virtue towards remitting the penalty of the souls in Purgatory, or, as they say, "*de condigno*,"—yet, if these suffrages be offered by a man in a state of mortal sin, but without an actual affection to sin, and under the motion of the Holy Ghost, there are reasons to believe that God, in consideration of these works, will shorten the penalties of the suffering souls; not indeed in an infallible manner, but because it becomes His Mercy and Justice to do so, or, as theologians say, "*de congruo*." The Church has not yet pronounced on this point.<sup>1</sup>

14. From what we have hitherto explained, it is clear that an Indulgence is the condonation of a debt which the sinner has contracted, both in the sight of God and in the sight of the Church, and which he has still to pay when he has already obtained the remission of his sins; which condonation

<sup>1</sup> See Beringer, "Les Indulgences," &c., Part i. p. 68.



is made in virtue and by the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and of His saints, by the qualified pastors of the Church, for some just and reasonable motive.

From this we can infer that an Indulgence is both a payment, "*solutio*," and a remission, "*absolutio*." It is a strict payment of the debt which the sinner has contracted, and indeed a payment "to the last farthing."<sup>1</sup> It is a remission, for the money is taken not from the sinner's fund, which is exhausted, but from the inexhaustible treasure of Christ and of His saints.

In the ancient Indults, the usual clause by which Indulgences were published used to run in this wise: *remittimus de pœnitiis injunctis dies, &c.*—"We remit of the penalties enjoined so many days." It meant that the penitent obtained from God as much of the remission of his debt, as he would have been able to discharge through means of the canonical penances, had they been imposed upon him, or of the penance which the priest might rigorously have imposed upon him in the tribunal of penance.

Sometimes the words *et injungendis*, "to be enjoined," were added. "This addition," says Father Beringer, "would refer to the penances which would still remain to be imposed upon the reconciled sinner. For the Church ever believed that an Indulgence, when gained, stood, either totally or partially, in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 26.

lieu of the penances which otherwise would have been imposed, in accordance with the penitential canons or by the confessor.”<sup>1</sup>

However, as this clause gave rise to misinterpretations, the words *vel alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis*, “or from penances otherwise due,” have been substituted for the preceding formula in later years in the Bulls of concession.

Hence an Indulgence is not properly the remission of sin, for it supposes sin to have already been remitted. Sometimes, however, it is called *remission of sin*; but then the word sin is taken to signify the punishment due to sin. Holy Scripture itself often uses the word sin in this sense,<sup>2</sup> and St. Augustine teaches us that the word sin can be taken in many and various ways, of which punishment for sin is one.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, when an Indulgence is granted in these terms: “*from guilt and from pain*,”—*a culpa et a pœna*,—the first part of the clause refers to the Sacrament of Penance, and the second to the power of Indulgences; or, according to Cardinal Bellarmine’s interpretation,<sup>4</sup> it indicates that the Sacrament of Penance is a condition presupposed for the gaining of the Indulgence. And so the Pope remits the *guilt of stain* by granting to his subordinate priests the power of absolving, of freeing the penitent from cen-

<sup>1</sup> Les Indulgences, &c., P. i. p. 54, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. gr. 2 Macc. xii. 46; 2 Cor. v. 21.

<sup>3</sup> L. iii. c. duas Ep. Pelag., c. vi. n. 16.

<sup>4</sup> De Indulg., l. i. c. vii.

tures and reserved cases ; and he condones the *pain* by applying to the same penitent, when his guilt has already been forgiven, the satisfactions of Jesus Christ and of His saints.

It is no less erroneous to assert that Indulgences are nothing more than the remission of that canonical penance which should be imposed upon the sinner, according to the ancient statutes of the Church. This was the content of Luther's nineteenth proposition, in which he said that Indulgences have no virtue whatever to remit the penalty which we owe for our sins to the Divine Justice.

Although this assertion was condemned by Leo X. in his Bull "Exurge Domine," yet the fathers of the pseudo-Synod of Pistoia maintained <sup>1</sup> "that an Indulgence, according to its true meaning, is nothing else than the remission of a part of the penance which the sacred canons imposed on penitents."

Such a proposition as this was deservedly condemned by Pius VI.<sup>2</sup> For, as St. Thomas had already observed,<sup>3</sup> it expressly derogates from the privilege granted to St. Peter by our Lord Himself, who said to him that whatsoever he should "loose upon earth should also be loosed in heaven."<sup>4</sup> Besides, if Indulgences are available only in the sight of the Church, and not in the sight of God, the Church might indeed be said to deceive the faithful. For,

<sup>1</sup> Prop. 40.

<sup>2</sup> In his Bull "Auctorem Fidei" of the 28th August 1794.

<sup>3</sup> 4 Sent. d. 20, q. 1, a. 3, sol. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xvi. 19.

as the same St. Thomas remarks,<sup>1</sup> she would, by thus dispensing them from performing their canonical penance, hand them over to the tribunal of God no less guilty, because, on the plea of a false pardon, they have omitted to do a suitable penance. Thus would Indulgences, instead of proving a wholesome practice, as the Holy Council of Trent<sup>2</sup> declares them to be, simply result in a baneful institution, which the sooner it were destroyed the better.

However, those Indulgences, at least, will be acknowledged to be more than the remission of the canonical penances, which are granted by the Church on behalf of souls in Purgatory, for these are no longer able to undergo those painful exercises.

In a word, heretics would not have attacked the Church and her doctrine on this subject in such a virulent manner, had Indulgences been simply a remission of the canonical penance; for it was plain that the Church could modify a chastisement which she alone had established.<sup>3</sup>

It is hardly worth our while to point to the ludicrously absurd notion of Indulgences, which is not unfrequently found in prejudiced Protestant writers, who make them out to be "remissions of sin on payment of a sum of money, according to a fixed table of rates;" or who, more absurdly still, call Indulgences "remissions of sin not yet com-

<sup>1</sup> Supplem. q. xxv. a. i.      <sup>2</sup> Sess. 25, Decr. de Ind.

<sup>3</sup> Wilmers, quoted by Beringer, Part I., ii.

mitted," or "even a license to sin given before the sin is perpetrated."<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, an Indulgence does not free the repentant sinner from such consequences as are naturally involved in the idea of true and genuine penance, as, for instance, from the obligation of restoring ill-gotten property, from the duty of retracting false and slanderous reports, or of avoiding the occasions of a relapse. Nor does it stave off the natural consequences of sin, such as poverty, shame, sickness, the loss of reputation, of friends, and the like.

15. Perhaps it will not be without interest and usefulness for some of our readers to trace back the origin of this word *Indulgence*.

This word is several times found in Holy Scripture, but with different meanings. Sometimes it is equivalent to *release*, *deliverance*, *remission*, as in the 1st verse of the 61st chapter of Isaias, in which the prophet says, in the person of Christ, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . . He hath sent me to preach a *release* to the captives;" for which the Vulgate has "ut prædicarem captivis *indulgentiam*." Which word implies an action of freeing, of releasing, of remitting, as appears from the Greek of the Septuagint, ἀφεσις, and more so yet from the Hebrew דֶּרֶר (deror).

<sup>1</sup> It were well for such writers to be told of Cardinal Newman's story in his "Present Position of Catholics," of that clergyman who had sworn he had seen a price list of sins in the Cathedral of Brussels. On inquiry, this monstrous scandal turned out to be a simple list of the fees for the use of chairs.



The same passage, with a slight change of words, is repeated in the 18th and 19th verses of the 4th chapter of St. Luke, which our Blessed Lord fell upon when unfolding the book of Isaias : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . . He hath sent me . . . to preach *deliverance* to the captive." The Vulgate has "*prædicare captivis remissionem*;" but the Greek text has exactly the same words as the Septuagint, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν, for which the words *release*, *deliverance*, which are in the Catholic version, exhibit, to our opinion, a better rendering than the word *liberty*, which is the Protestant translation for the קִרְיָר of Isaias, though, for the word in the passage of St. Luke, the latter agrees with the Catholic version.

Sometimes, the word *Indulgence* is taken in Holy Writ to mean *mildness*, *condescension*, and it is thus used by St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> τοῦτο δὲ λέγω κατὰ συγγνώμην, οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν; for which the Catholic version has, "I speak this by *indulgence*, not by commandment," and the Protestant, "I speak this by *permission*, and not of commandment." The word συγγνώμη implies an idea of condescension, and almost of connivance.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that the word *Indulgence*, as we here take it, is only a blending of the two significations; for we call *Indulgence* the remission of a punishment due to sins, after the sinner has already obtained the

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Judith viii. 14; Isa. lxiii. 7 and 9.

pardon thereof, which remission is prompted by the motherly mildness and condescension of the Church, sympathising with our infirmity. Hence it is that we often find Indulgences called by the name of *remissions*, as in the Decretals,<sup>1</sup> in the letters of Alexander III., and other such documents.

16. Cardinal Bellarmine<sup>2</sup> is of opinion that the Church took this word "*Indulgence*," which has now been consecrated in her language to mean such a remission, from the laws by which the Roman emperors were wont on certain occasions to "indulge" (*indulgere*), that is to say, to grant to the prisoners, a remission of their punishment. Thus Baronius relates<sup>3</sup> that in the year 322 the Emperor Constantine, for the joy which he had experienced at the birth of his children Crispus and Helena, granted a solemn Indulgence to all criminals, excepting those guilty of sorcery, of murder and adultery.

The same Emperor, the year before, importuned by the prayers of the Donatists, had already granted an *Indulgence* to, that is to say, had freed from exile, those among them who had been condemned four years before, leaving it to God to punish those whom no chastisement had amended, or no clemency on the part of the prince had softened.<sup>4</sup>

Later on, it became customary to set prisoners free at Paschal time. Valentinian II. introduced this

<sup>1</sup> Tit. 10 de Pœnit. et Remiss.

<sup>2</sup> De Indulgentiis, l. i. c. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Annales, t. iii. sub ann. 322, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., sub ann. 321, n. 2

custom in an edict which he published on the fifth day before the Calends of March 385. He thereby ordered the judges to carry out that which he himself had been accustomed to grant (*indulgere*).<sup>1</sup> However, he excepted those criminals whose presence would rather have disturbed than augmented the joy and gladness of all.

The same *Indulgence* was also wont to be granted in the East, as appears from St. John Chrysostom, who relates the following words as having been pronounced by St. Flavian, the Bishop of Antioch, in an oration which this prelate delivered at Constantinople in the presence of the Emperor: "It was not enough for thee to have released those that were imprisoned, and forgiven them their crimes; thou wouldst also add: O would to God that I could also call back the dead, and raise them to life again!"<sup>2</sup>

Hence, in the ninth book of the Codex Theodosianus there is the thirty-ninth title, which treats of *Indulgences to crimes*; and in the third law it is said, that an Indulgence is the remission of crimes, with regard to the punishment exacted by the laws only; whilst in the fourth law an Indulgence sometimes is called remission, sometimes absolution.<sup>3</sup> Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> Baronius, Annales, t. iv. a. 385, n. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See F. Paulus Canciani, Ord. Serv. M., in his valuable work "*Barbarorum Leges Antiquæ*," Venetiis, 1781, vol. i. p. 55; iii. lib. vii. 280; iv. Lex Rom., n. 28; I. Lucius, ff. ad senatus-consultum Turpill. et l. Indulgentia, C. de generali abolitione; and Ammianus Marcellinus, l. 16. Also the Capitulars of Charles the Bald, tit. 30, cap. i. et alibi passim.

the same Codex Theodosianus contains a law called the Law of Indulgence, by which the emperors granted, at stated times, an amnesty to those who had been condemned for greater crimes. Hence the Greeks would call this Indulgence with the fitting term of *δωρεά, θεία δωρεά*, a gift, a divine gift.<sup>1</sup> Instances of this kind might be multiplied, but these have been recorded here to show how it may have been natural for the Church to adopt, in her own dogma, a term which was already in use, to express, with a higher and more spiritual meaning, that which she herself intended to do within her own sphere.

That the Church should thus have borrowed from profane sources and adapted to her own sacred usages this word Indulgence, cannot be surprising to any one ever so little acquainted with the origins of Christian worship. Her propagation was brought about, not so much by the destruction of the Pagan institutions which she found already existing at her appearance in this world, as by a transformation of the same into something truly supernatural and worthy of a thrice holy God.

She, who teaches us to sanctify even our most ordinary actions, and turn them to the glory of God and the good of our souls, taught the pagan world how much honour and glory they could give to God, and how much merit and grace they could gain for themselves, did they but purify their actions and

<sup>1</sup> See Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, at the word "Indulgentia."

illumine them with the light of supernatural faith. What wonder, then, that whilst the Church was cleansing and solemnly consecrating to God temples in which unsubstantial, empty, and even shameful deities had been adored, as in Rome, the Pantheon of Agrippa; whilst she was instituting Christian festivals which, like that of the 1st of January, should cause the faithful newly converted from Paganism to forget the abominable orgies committed on that day in honour of Janus,<sup>1</sup> or like that of the 1st of August, should direct their worship to St. Peter's blessed chains;<sup>2</sup> whilst she was assigning for her ministers the civil garment used in those days by persons of distinction,<sup>3</sup> what wonder that she should have borrowed from lay usages, and even from pagan emperors,<sup>4</sup> a word which expressed so well the remission which, on special conditions and circumstances, she gave her children?

Thus the words *parochus*, a "parish priest," *statio*, a "station," *vigiliæ*, a "vigil," *sacramentum*, a "sacrament," were originally used exclusively for military purposes; whilst the introduction of the doctrine of

<sup>1</sup> Martigny, Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes, at the word "Fêtes immobiles."

<sup>2</sup> See the sixth lesson of the Rom. Brev. on the feast of St. Peter's chains, 1st August.

<sup>3</sup> Duchesne, Origines du Culte Chrétien, chap. xi.; Paris, Ernest Thorin, 1889. Also Marangoni, Delle cose gentilesche profane trasportate ad ornamento ed uso delle chiese.

<sup>4</sup> There exist, says Baronius, Annales Eccl., t. i. ann. 210, n. 3, some medals of Severus Pius Augustus and his son Antoninus Pius, by which they *indulge* ("indulgent") several favours to the Carthaginians, for which cause Severus was numbered by the Africans among the gods.



Christ, who had come "to re-establish all things that are in heaven and on earth,"<sup>1</sup> gave a new and higher meaning to the names of charity, faith, hope, chastity, justice, and other natural virtues.

The ancient Jews also had their days of forgiveness and Indulgence. Calmet<sup>2</sup> tells us that there was this tradition among the Israelites, that every week, for the whole of Saturday, the punishment of the souls in Purgatory was suspended. This persuasion was confirmed by the story they narrate, that, when once a man manifested signs of misgivings about it, a Rabbi perceptibly showed him how, on that day, no smoke came out of his father's tomb.

The day of solemn expiation was also held by them as a day of Indulgence; for they were convinced that the many prayers which they said, the many works of penance which they practised on that day, brought to those souls a great deal of refreshment.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Dissert. de natura animæ et ejus post mortem statu ex sententia Veterum Hebræorum. Art. viii. in the second volume of the Venice edition of his works, 1755.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TWO FOUNTAINS

*“ Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our Epistle.”—2 THESS. ii. 14.*

#### INDULGENCES IN THE WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN WORD OF GOD

The xxii. Article of the Church of England—Holy Scripture not the only source of Faith—Indulgences implicitly contained in Holy Writ—A consequence of the Power of the Keys—Explicit proofs—St. Paul and the incestuous man of Corinth—Tradition on Indulgences—The Church and the gates of Hell—The exercise of a Right and its existence—The Essential and the Accidental in an Indulgence—The notion of development in the Church—Two ways of studying Tradition—Quintus Septimius Florentius Tertullian.

I. WE have stated the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning Indulgences. It follows as a natural corollary from several of the main tenets of the Christian religion. Indeed, if a temporal punishment is still due to the sinner who has been forgiven; if there exists in the Church a treasury of satisfactory merits, composed of the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and of His saints; if the unity of faith and charity places us in a direct communion with the Church triumphant and suffering, it is but natural to say, that a part of these satisfactions can be made over to us by the lawful pastors of the

Church for the atonement of our debt, and that we can make over to the souls of our departed friends, that which we might otherwise have gained for our own selves.

It now remains to see whether such a doctrine has any foundation in the teaching of Scripture, and in the practice of the centuries that have preceded us.

The 22nd among the Articles of the Church of England gives to this question a flat denial. For, it peremptorily asserts that "the Romish doctrine concerning pardons is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."

Before we set ourselves to examine the charge, it will not be out of place to bear in mind one consideration.

2. It cannot be admitted, without grievous prejudice to the deposit of faith, that those truths *only* which are contained in Holy Scripture form a part of the revealed Word of God, and are to be believed by the faithful. From the fact that Christ has established a living authority in His Church, that He has intrusted this authority with the care of representing and continuing His own mission, it follows that what the Church holds and practises, is to be held and practised no less than the word of Christ Himself. Thus did St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, charge them to "hold the traditions which they had learned, whether by word or by our Epistle."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 14.

Supposing, therefore, that the Holy Scriptures were perfectly silent about Indulgences, we should have no right to conclude against their existence. It may well be that such a doctrine is contained in the teaching of the Church, commonly called Tradition. This even Protestants acknowledge in practice. They believe in the descent of our blessed Saviour into hell, and keep holy the first day of the week instead of the Sabbath, only because of the traditional teaching of the Church, for no word is to be found in Holy Scripture bearing on these points.

On the subject of Indulgences, however, Holy Scripture is not silent. For the sake of clearness, we shall first show, how that doctrine is contained indirectly in Holy Writ; and next, that it is literally expressed therein.

3. That the doctrine of Indulgences is contained indirectly and implicitly in the Sacred Scriptures, is almost self-evident. Let it be borne in mind what the general idea of an Indulgence is. It has been said above that an Indulgence is the remission of a temporal debt, made by God to a sinner, in consideration of the satisfactory merits of His Divine Son and of His saints. This is the same as to say, that God in His Mercy is willing to overlook a man's debt, on the consideration that other men, akin to him, have sufficiently atoned for that debt.

Now, of this benign acceptance of other men's satisfactions on the part of God, we have no lack of

proofs in Holy Scripture. When He declared to His faithful servant Abraham that He would spare the impious city of Sodom, if only ten just men were found therein ; when, at Moses's earnest request, he delayed the punishment which He had decreed to inflict on the children of Israel, on account of their sin of idolatry—what were these, but proofs that God is willing to forgive man his debt of temporal punishment, in consideration of the satisfactions of others ?

But we do not even need such proofs, to show that God readily accepts the satisfactions of some, as a compensation for the trespasses of others. For if, on account of the sin of one person only, He has sometimes punished whole kingdoms, as when He struck the Jewish nation for David's sin in numbering his people, how can we doubt that He "whose tender mercies are above all His works,"<sup>1</sup> who is much more prone to forgive than to punish, will overlook, in the dispensation of His Justice, the infinite satisfactions of His beloved Son, and those of His elect, who are so dear to Him ?

This cannot be. For if God is a severe Judge, He is equally clothed with the attributes of a tender Father ; and if He has threatened "to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation,"<sup>2</sup> He has no less pledged Himself not to leave unrewarded even the smallest good work, were it only the giving of a cup of cold water in His name.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxliv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. v. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ix. 40.



If so, must we not acknowledge that, at least, the general idea which is implied by the doctrine of Pardons or Indulgences, not only is not inconsistent with the tone of the Holy Scriptures, but that it cannot be denied without a grievous affront being offered to God's infinite Goodness and Mercy?

The Apostle St. Paul believed in this kind of communication when he wrote to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls, although loving you more, I be loved less." And to the Colossians,<sup>2</sup> "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh, for His body which is the Church." And to Timothy,<sup>3</sup> "I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with heavenly glory."

4. This consideration, drawn from the general aspect of the Sacred Scriptures, may be sufficient to show us how reasonably it can be said that God may, in consideration of the merits of some of His saints, remit to others the temporal debt due to their sins, but it does not evince the existence of such a power in the Church. However, even this can be inferred clearly, though indirectly, from the teaching of the New Testament.

Here we find that our blessed Saviour first said to St. Peter, and then to all His Apostles, "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 10.

shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.”<sup>1</sup> By these words, Jesus Christ gave to the first pastors of His Church what is called the power of the Keys, viz., the power of opening or keeping closed the gates of heaven.

Now there are two things, and two things only, which shut the gates of Paradise against a soul: the one is its own unworthiness, the other the temporal debt which it may have to pay to God’s inexorable Justice. For the removal of the first, the Sacrament of Penance has been ordained; for the removal of the second, we claim that some other remedy has been instituted.

In fact, if the Church can wash away from the soul the guilt of stain, and thereby prepare it to meet the Creator, she can also exonerate it from the lighter guilt of debt which it may still have to pay to His Justice. If she have power over the precious Blood of Jesus for the remission of sin, so also has she for the atonement of the punishment. To grant the one and to deny the other, is to limit Christ’s gift, to circumscribe His generosity, to halve His donation. Such consequences must he face, such incoherence in the Word of God must he admit, who acknowledges in the Church a power of remitting sins, but will not own that she has any authority to release the sinner’s debt of temporal punishment, to grant Indulgences.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18.

Henry VIII., when as yet he had not begun to fight against the Church, in the book which he wrote against Luther, in defence of the Sacraments,<sup>1</sup> acknowledged that the power of granting Indulgences was implicitly contained in these words of Christ to St. Peter and to His Apostles, "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven," and in these other words, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."<sup>2</sup>

5. But we have in Holy Scripture something more than indirect hints, concerning the practice of Indulgences: we have explicit evidences.

There is hardly anything more touching in the New Testament, than the history of the woman taken in adultery. According to the Jewish law, she must die, for "Moses in the law commanded to stone such a one."<sup>3</sup> The scribes and Pharisees knew it, and this was for them a sufficient pretext for tempting Jesus. They knew how meek He was for sinners, but will His meekness make Him forgetful of the rigour of justice? "What sayest thou?" they asked insidiously.

But the just Judge, who knew the amount of guilt that lay on the conscience of each of the accusers, put them to shame: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The book is entitled "Assertio VII. Sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum, edita ab invictissimo Angliæ et Franciæ Rege et Domino Hiberniæ Henrico ejus nominis octavo, Londini, 1521," at the article "De Indulgentiis."

<sup>2</sup> John xx. 23.

<sup>3</sup> John viii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. viii. 7.

Confounded, convicted by their own consciences, they withdrew one by one. "And Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus, lifting up Himself, said to her, 'Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?' Who said, 'No man, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither will I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.'"<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, the Son of God, of His divine authority, discharged that woman from that pain to which she was subject according to the law of Moses. We little know what passed between that woman and Jesus. We can only conjecture about the torrents of grace which, from the Sacred Heart, flowed on the soul of that woman. Yet, we do not hesitate to infer that He remitted her, out of the fulness of His mercy, that corresponding pain to which she was liable in the tribunal of God. And as, when He sent His Apostles, He invested them with His own authority, it follows that they and their successors must have possessed the power of remitting the penalty due to sin, even as Christ possessed it.<sup>2</sup>

6. But we have yet more explicit evidence.

In his first Epistle to the faithful of the city of Corinth,<sup>3</sup> the Apostle had severely rebuked them, for having suffered a man charged with the infamous crime of incest, to dwell in their midst and converse

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> See S. Thom., Suppl. q. xxv. a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. v.

with them. Then, making use of all his apostolic authority, he had solemnly excommunicated that sinner, viz., he had cut him off from the company of the faithful, and forbidden them "with such a one not so much as to eat, but rather to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Now it happened that shortly afterwards St. Timothy, whom St. Paul had sent to Corinth, came back to the Apostle, and related to him what progress the Corinthians had made in the faith, and how they had profited by the admonitions he had given them in his first Epistle. He spoke in particular of the sorrow, which the faithful had experienced, when St. Paul had cut off that sinner from their communion, of the signs of compunction and repentance this poor sinner had given, and of the desire and prayer of the Church to readmit him to their fellowship.

St. Paul's heart was gladdened, and giving vent to his feelings, he wrote from Macedonia, where he then chanced to be, to the same Corinthians, that second letter, the tone of which is so different from the first. It was sent by the Apostle through the means of his faithful disciples, Titus and Luke.

In the second chapter, St. Paul begins by apologising for the sorrow which he, unwillingly indeed, had caused them. Then, he declares himself satisfied

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 5.



with the trial to which the sinner had been put, exhorting at the same time the faithful to relax their severity, and to show him now mercy and kindness. "To him . . . this rebuke is sufficient, that is given by many: so that, contrariwise, you should rather pardon and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. For which cause I beseech you, that you would confirm your charity towards him."<sup>1</sup>

But the faithful had interpreted the Apostle's desire; they had already mitigated the severity of the chastisement inflicted, or were about to do so. St. Paul approves of such a determination, and indorses it with the fulness of his apostolic authority: "To whom you have pardoned anything, I also. For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it, in the person of Christ, that we be not over-reached by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices."<sup>2</sup>

Consider the import of these words. Here we have "Paul, an Apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father,"<sup>3</sup> intrusted with power from above over the Church,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Verses 10 and 11. The Greek text of the Codex Sinaiticus runs as follows:—"Οὐ δέ τι χαρίζεσθε, καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ὁ κεχάρισμαι, εἴ τι κεχάρισμαι, δι' ὑμᾶς ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ. οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν." Which the Protestant version thus renders:—"To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ, lest Satan should get an advantage of you; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i. 1.

indeed an "ambassador for Christ,"<sup>1</sup> who, in the name and in the very person of Christ, ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ, grants to a man who had already shown such proofs of repentance, that there was a fear lest sorrow should overcome him, a solemn remission of that penance which had been imposed upon him, and which consisted in being cut off from the communion of the faithful, and this for a just motive, viz., lest that sinner should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," and from this excessive sorrow the infernal spirit, of whose devices St. Paul was not ignorant, should take advantage of the severity of the pastors, to plunge that unfortunate sinner into an abyss of despair.

Here, then, we see verified to the letter the definition of an Indulgence, as given above, and the existence of the three conditions required for its validity: authority in him who grants it, a just and pious motive for granting it, and the state of grace in him to whom it is applied. Therefore we say that St. Paul granted a formal Indulgence, not different in kind from those which the Church has granted in all ages.

Now, observe that such pardon, granted in the person of Christ, must have freed that man from the burden of his debt of temporal punishment, not only in the sight of the Church, but in the sight of God also. For Christ is the invisible and spiritual Head of the Church. He, therefore, has an invisible spiri-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

tual action upon the members, an action which consists in the interior sanctifying and cleansing of the soul.

That this is the way in which St. Paul's pardon is to be understood, is evident from the absurdity which would follow from a different interpretation.

Had the Apostle released that man from the debt he owed to the Church, and not from that which he owed to his God, he would, by freeing him from his penitential exercise, have deprived him of the means of atoning for his debt before God, and thus would have made him suffer less in this life, in order to make him liable to suffer more in the next. Would not such a pardon have been rather a mockery than a forgiveness? <sup>1</sup>

Such, then, are the evidences afforded us in Holy Writ about Indulgences, evidences which cannot fail to strike any man of simple faith and sound judgment. But if such a doctrine be in accordance with the general tone of the Sacred Scripture; if it flow as a natural and necessary conclusion from some of its doctrinal points; if we find it practised by the Apostle of the Gentiles, with what ground of truth, with what appearance even of probability, does the 22nd Article of the Church of England assert that "such a doctrine is grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God?"

7. However, Holy Scripture is not the only source

<sup>1</sup> See St. Thom, Suppl. q. xxv. a. i.

of faith. Many truths are not explicitly contained therein, but are handed down by word of mouth from Christ and His Apostles, through successive generations in the Church, down to our own times. This we call Tradition. It is a teaching no less divine than Scripture; the only difference being that the latter is the written, and the former the unwritten Word of God.

This Protestants will not admit, acknowledging as they do, in matters of faith, Scripture and Scripture only. But it is a most curious fact, that when they come to examine the tenets of the Catholic Church, by an inconceivable contradiction, they reject these tenets, on the gratuitously asserted plea that they are not grounded on any testimony of the Fathers, or that they cannot be countenanced by any practice of the primitive Church.

Indeed, it is strange beyond expression, that they, who maintain the exclusive authority of Scripture to determine the points of doctrine and discipline to be held in the Church, should reject the lawfulness of the practices of the Catholic Church, although based upon clear evidences of Scripture, unless they appear to them to be justified by the sanction of an unbroken tradition.

As regards Indulgences, if Scripture alone is a sufficient guide to our belief, then, we need not further inquire into their dogmatic worth. They are a lawful practice, because based upon the very words of Scripture. And, if we need to have it cor-

roborated by the tradition of ages that have preceded us, then we must associate with Scripture Tradition also as a rule of faith; and then we have not one, but two fountain-heads of doctrine—*Scripture* and *Tradition*—which indeed are but a twofold aspect of the same word of God spoken to man, a twofold shoot from the same root of faith, a mutual exposition of the same divine doctrine—Scripture ministering to Tradition the elements of revealed truth; Tradition, clothing them with its own variegated garb, and illustrating them in sundry ways to the eyes of the simple and of the little ones.

On the matter in hand, then, one of the greatest difficulties which hinder Protestants from acknowledging the validity of Indulgences is, according to them, the absence of warranty from the writings of the Fathers and the practice of the primitive Church. Which Chemnitius thus expressed:—"No testimony of the Fathers, no instance in the ancient Church, can be brought forward to show, that either such a doctrine, or the use of such Indulgences ever existed in the primitive Church until the year 1200."<sup>1</sup>

8. The charge is of a serious nature. It is equivalent to asserting that at that epoch the Church, by introducing Indulgences, departed from the purity of the doctrine of Christ, was substantially altered from what her Divine Founder meant her to be, and error was substituted in her teaching for divinely revealed truth.

<sup>1</sup> In P. 4, Exam. Conc. Trid.



From such an assertion a conclusion necessarily follows, which we doubt whether any one, having faith in the Scripture, would dare to uphold.

If the doctrine concerning Pardons or Indulgences is an erroneous doctrine, contrary to God's Word, and if the Church from the thirteenth century only has, by her oft-repeated practice, upheld that which she had not been commissioned to teach, it follows that on this point she has been in error, she has practically taught heresy. That she taught error can mean nothing else, than that she deserted her Spouse and was given over to the powers of darkness, that she made a compromise with the sons of Belial, and that the gates of hell finally prevailed against her.

And note this, that not only the general body of Bishops, throughout the world, is involved in the charge, for having most of them exercised this power of granting Pardons to their flock; not only the whole list of Roman Pontiffs, each of whom for so many centuries back have, as Henry VIII.<sup>1</sup> himself observed, granted Indulgences under some form or other, but the whole Church at large, as it comprehends the pastors and the faithful; for the readiness of the latter in accepting, never fell short of the liberality of the former in granting.

To say, then, that the Church in the thirteenth century departed, in the matter of Indulgences, from the teaching of Christ, is the same as to say that,

<sup>1</sup> Assertio VII. Sac. at the article "De Indulgentiis."

at least by silent connivance, and this for the space of over three centuries, she has countenanced heresy, she has borne with error. Which is equal to saying that, for the space of three hundred years, the Divine Spouse of the Church has deserted her, thus making void His promise that He would ever be with her to the end of the world,<sup>1</sup> and that the gates of hell should never prevail against her.<sup>2</sup>

9. But, to examine more closely into the objection, let us suppose that, in reality, the Church never granted Indulgences previously to the eleventh century. From this fact could any one, we ask, infer that therefore the Church has no power to grant them? From the non-exercise of a power, is it lawful to infer the non-existence of the power itself?

The question conveys its own answer. The non-exercise of a right is no argument against the existence of that right, as, on the contrary, the mere use of a right confers no claim thereto; it is only in him who uses it, a sign of what he either really possesses or else falsely claims to possess.

In reality, as the display of a power confers no power, so it is simply illogical, from the absence of such a display, to infer the absence of the power itself.

Doubtless, our Divine Saviour was not by any means bound, even as man, to pay to earthly kings the legal tribute.<sup>3</sup> If the children of temporal kings

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Catena Aurea* on Matt. xvii. 26.

are exempt from this law, how much more the eternal Son of the King of Glory ! But, for our instruction, He would not exercise His right of exemption. On one occasion He even wrought a miracle, so as to be enabled to pay the tribute. "That we may not scandalise them," said Jesus to Peter, "go to the sea and cast in a hook : and that fish which shall first come up, take : and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater : take that, and give it to them for me and thee."<sup>1</sup> Yet, by so doing, Jesus did not forego His right. He remained the one great Lord, who is no man's tributary, but to whom the "children of God" are bidden "bring the offsprings of rams,"<sup>2</sup> and to whom "the kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents, the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts."<sup>3</sup>

Again, the Apostle of the Gentiles had no doubt a right to be maintained at the charges of those to whom he preached. But he chose not to make use of it, "lest he should be a hindrance to the Gospel of Christ." Yet, by no means did he intend to renounce this very natural right. "If others be partakers of this power, why not we rather?"<sup>4</sup>

And so, the absence of the exercise of a right is no argument against its existence, as from the fact that a child does not use its reasoning faculties, it would be illogical to infer that it does not possess them.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxviii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxi. 10.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 12.

Hence, even though we were to grant that the Church, previously to the eleventh century, has never granted Indulgences, this would be no proof that in reality such a power does not belong to her. However, the truth on this point will be clearly shown hereafter.

10. But before we peruse the different ages of the Church, and examine what amount of evidence each epoch supplies in favour of the doctrine and practice of Indulgences, there is an obvious distinction to be made, between what belongs to the substance of an Indulgence and what belongs only to the form—between that which is essentially contained in an Indulgence, and that which is only accidentally connected with it.

An Indulgence is the remission, granted by the Church, but ratified by God, of a debt of temporal punishment. This is what constitutes its nature, this is what is absolutely requisite for its essence; the rest is purely accidental. That this remission be granted under one form or another, depends on circumstances. The first is a point of dogma, and therefore unchangeable; the second is a matter of discipline, and therefore changeable according to time, manner, and places, as it seems fit to the Church. In both, dogma and discipline, she is the mother and mistress of truth.

If, therefore, it is to be shown that she ever has granted Indulgences, it will be *necessary* and *sufficient* to show that she has granted, in the sight

of God, the remission of a temporal punishment, for she was at liberty to grant it under one form or another, as might seem to her more appropriate.

This, and this only, is that for which we contend. To pretend that Indulgences, if ever they were granted in the primitive Church, ought to have been granted in the very same form in which they now appear, would be as erroneous, not to say absurd, as to presume to maintain that unless the faithful fast now-a-days as they fasted in the primitive Church, they cannot be said in reality to fast.

11. But there are some who will not be reconciled to the fact, that there is progress and development in the Church of Christ. They imagine her discipline to be as immutable as her dogma. According to them, the Church was born, she grew, she was strengthened, she reached her full development on the same day on which she sprang forth from the Saviour's side. From that time to the end of her existence, she must remain stationary, like an inert body, alien from any sort of progress and increase.

But this is not the idea which the Holy Scriptures exhibit to us, nor that which is suggested by the very constitution of the Church. Indeed, the Church is represented to us by St. Paul as a living body, which "by joints and bands being supplied with nourishment and compacted, groweth into the increase of God."<sup>1</sup> Now it is the

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 19.



condition of a living body, as, for instance, the human body, to pass from the infirmity of childhood to the vigour of youth and to the strength of manhood.

In fact, the supernatural order is analogous to the order of nature. For grace is founded on nature, and it works in a proportionate manner. Now we find in every living body, whether physical or moral, a stage of proficiency succeeding to a stage of mere beginning, and a stage of perfection succeeding to that of proficiency. As the perfection of the whole depends on the perfection of the parts, and the parts themselves attain their own perfection only by the force of natural growth and development, so the perfection of a living body depends on the perfection of its members, and the members themselves reach their proper degree of perfection when they acquire that vigour and development which befits their nature.

So it is in the Church. When her Divine Founder created her, He did not give her that complete equipment of practices and traditions which we now behold, but He left her to attain, by the working together of time, of circumstances, and especially of grace, that degree of development which it was His intention she should reach.

Hence it is that we speak of her sometimes, with reference to what she was in her cradle, "*Ecclesia nascens*;" sometimes with reference to what she was, when still wrapped up, as it were, in her swaddling-clothes, "*Ecclesia vagiens*;" sometimes

with reference to the state of youth and vigour she had acquired, when, in the fourth century, she was led by Constantine's hands out of the prison of the Catacombs, still bearing on her brow, it is true, the sign of her sufferings, but radiant with freshness and beauty.

Having this before our mind, it will be easy to understand how it is possible that, in a point of doctrine like that of Indulgences, the Church, whilst retaining unaltered their unchangeable nature, may have varied in the disciplinary or practical part of the same, precisely on account of the changes which Christian society has undergone.

And not more than this do we intend to prove, viz., that the Church, long before the thirteenth century, granted Indulgences similar in kind to those which she now grants, though the form of granting them, owing to the change of circumstances, be now different from what it was then.

And this, if it be proved, as we trust it will be, must be sufficient for any fair inquirer who acknowledges the authority of the Church in matters of discipline, to conclude that, by granting Indulgences, she continues even now, in an uninterrupted manner, a practice which she has carried on ever since her foundation: that, if she teaches the doctrine of Pardons, it is only because she received it from an unbroken tradition, fully carrying out the prescription laid down by St. Stephen the Pope: "Let

there be no innovation; hold fast to the received doctrine."<sup>1</sup>

12. For the study of tradition on Indulgences, two ways lie open before us. On the one hand, we might enter into the vast field of patristic erudition, unfold the Fathers' writings, consult the innumerable works they have left us—books, tracts, letters, questions, and the rest—and confront all they have said on the subject of Indulgences, with the present practice of the Church.

But this way is long and has many a winding. Moreover, we know that the first Fathers, even as the sacred writers, never had an intention of writing theological treatises; there was no need at the time of such elaborate erudition, and besides, there was then in full vigour a law jealously kept among the Christians, the law of secrecy—*disciplina arcani*—by which it was strictly forbidden to lay open to profane ears the Christian mysteries, for it is not becoming "to give that which is holy to dogs, nor to cast pearls before swine."<sup>2</sup>

Further, any one who is a little acquainted with the writings of the Fathers, especially of those of the early times, will not have failed to observe of what a highly spiritual nature these writings are, and consequently how much generality, and even mistiness, there is about them, so that a commentary is necessary for a proper understanding of the same,

<sup>1</sup> "Nihil innovetur, nisi quod traditum est." Quoted by St. Cyprian, Ep. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 6.

no less, sometimes, than for the understanding of Holy Scripture.

And so, the course which suggests itself to the student of tradition as shorter, more appropriate, and fruitful of better result, is the study of what the Church ever practised in her discipline, and performed in her liturgy, since the very beginning of her existence. This will give us the key to the understanding of the more obscure passages of the Fathers : it will make us live with our own ancestors in the faith ; and so, confronting our lives and practices with theirs, we shall be able to decide what is truly apostolic, and engrafted on Christ Himself, from what is but extraneous growth and heterogeneous addition.

13. This we shall do. Yet, we cannot end this chapter without saying a few words about one of the early Fathers of the Church, one who may be said to represent in a more perfect manner the Catholic tradition on the discipline of Penance, and of the consequent Pardons or Indulgences.

Quintus Septimius Florentius Tertullian (about 160-240) had been endowed by God with wonderful gifts—a potent mind, a grasping memory, a deep-thinking intellect. His erudition knew no limits, and he could exercise his genius with equal advantage on any subject. Like Paul, he had spent his talents and employed his energy in combating the Christian religion ; like him, too, he was overwhelmed by the dazzling light which encompassed

the Spouse of Christ. When a little over thirty, he embraced the Christian religion, of which he even became a priest.

His zeal, then, was turned to the defence of the Church and her dogmas, and, with that vehemence of language and quickness of style which is all peculiar to him, he equally confuted the Jews, the heathens, the heretics, and particularly the Gnostics of that time.

He wrote his book "De Pœnitentia," in order to set forth the true Christian idea about Penance, unfolding its essence and meaning, marking out its extension and proving its necessity with regard to Catechumens, and such as have need of this remedy after baptism.

It seems hardly credible that such a genius should have listened with complacency to the absurd declamations of Montanus, and should have given credit to his vain and empty dreams. More astonishing still it is to see, that he should have left the kindly and secure light of the Catholic Church, to follow the presumptuous illuminations and proud illusions of the Montanists, and that he should now have turned those weapons with which he had mightily overcome their sect, against those of his own fold, whom he, together with the spiritualists of this new sect, would now style *psychicians* or *animals*.

Then, Tertullian began to teach just the contrary of what he had hitherto held in matter of doctrine ;



but he could not unsay what he had said, and he had spoken so well whilst a Catholic, that what he now said had already been confuted by himself.

However, he must now speak evil, for out of a perverse heart good things cannot come; and among other books, he wrote one entitled "*De Pudicitia*," in which he spoke of Penance, and withdrew what he had previously said. He denied, with Montanus, that remission or absolution could be given for mortal sins committed after baptism, especially for the more grievous kinds, like apostasy, homicide, adultery, and the like. Such as commit these sins, he maintained, are irrevocably cast away from the bosom of the Church, and abandoned to the Justice of God, without any hope of further reconciliation. He distorted St. Paul's passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> alluded to above as the chief scriptural evidence in favour of Indulgences.

So much opposition against the Catholic dogma brought him consequently to deny the existence, in the Church, of the power of the Keys, of the satisfactory merits of the martyrs, and of the efficacy of their intercession, building up, according to his own fashion, a new Church invisible and insensible, in which he acknowledged the fulness of the spirit, instead of that living, active, and visible Church which Christ built, and which acts sensibly through her pastors and faithful.

The enormous and abnormal excesses to which

<sup>1</sup> Chap. v. from verse 1-6.

these principles led Tertullian, are the best confutation of the same. How can he be right at the outset, whom his path leads so much astray?

Then Tertullian was in open contradiction with that venerable tradition of already well-nigh two centuries; his voice had no echo; it was a dissonant note in the splendid harmony of the Fathers. And so, he was condemned to stand for ages as testimony against these very errors, for his previous writings could not easily be cancelled, and the Church had in them an open and irrevocable confession of her faith. Truly, if ever, now certainly "iniquity did lie to itself."<sup>1</sup>

However, it is now time that we should study what has been the practice of the Church, with regard to Pardons or Indulgences, ever since the beginning of her foundation. But the idea of pardon supposes the idea of penance; it is a warrant of forgiveness given to an offender, and an exemption from punishment. It is necessary, therefore, that we should first speak of what the practice of Penance was in the primitive ages of the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxvi. 12.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SECOND PLANK AFTER SHIPWRECK

*"Therefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes."*—  
JOB xlii. 6.

### THE APOSTOLIC AGE AND THE FIRST CENTURIES OF THE CHURCH

The practice of Penance in the primitive Church—The first degree of Penitents—Second degree—Third degree—Fourth degree—The practice of the Western Church—St. Fabiola—The Emperor Theodosius the Great and St. Ambrose—Public Penance not the only one then in use—When was public Penance applied—Voluntary Penitents—The Reconciliation—Those to whom Reconciliation was denied—Public and canonical Penance not essentially the same—The power of Bishops with regard to public Penance—Further use of this power—The canonical Penances and Indulgences.

1. IN order, then, to understand how the Church granted Indulgences ever since the first ages of her existence, it is necessary to take beforehand a general view of the public penances enjoined by the sacred canons, as an expiation for the more grievous sins.

In the beginning, those among the faithful who were guilty of lesser faults, were simply deprived of the right of bringing their offerings to the altar and receiving Holy Communion. Those who were guilty of more grievous crimes, were excluded from the assembly of the Christians; while others, more guilty

still, were banished for ever from the Church, and their names were struck off the rolls of the faithful.<sup>1</sup>

Later on, four degrees of penance were established, each of which gave origin to a special class of penitents.

2. In the first class, were included those among the faithful who were interdicted entrance into the church. They were condemned to stand outside the sacred place, and even outside the atrium, and to remain in the exterior *narthex*<sup>2</sup> during the celebration of the sacred mysteries. They were clad in a mourning garment, and wore sackcloth as a sign of their penance; their hair was dishevelled and bestrewn with ashes.

In this humiliating and mournful attire they used to confess their sins publicly, and beseech the faithful who went into the church, to pray to God for their forgiveness.

They would often mingle their tears with their prayers and supplications, hence their name *flentes*, or

<sup>1</sup> Martigny, Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes, at the article "Pénitence canonique."

<sup>2</sup> *Narthex*, from the Greek *νάρθηξ*, *ferula*, so called on account of its figure resembling an oblong rectangular wooden rule. There was formally a twofold narthex joined to the basilicas, one exterior, the other interior. The exterior one, also called *προπυλαίον*, was a vestibule in the shape of a portico situated outside the church, which occupied all the breadth thereof. It had three, five, and even seven columns, and was also used as a place of interment, when intramural burial was allowed. Princes and kings often ambitioned this honour. An atrium and biporticus, or sometimes quadriporticus, separated this from the interior narthex, which was another vestibule, similar to the first, but separated from the nave by a wall having three, and sometimes five, doors leading in to the church.

“weepers,” and their degree was called *πρόσκλαυσις*, “a weeping.” Sometimes they would kneel and kiss the feet of the faithful, entreating them to interpose their mediation with the bishop, that he would admit them among the penitents of the Church, for, rather than true penitents, they were candidates for penance. This preparatory stage of penance lasted sometimes several years.

3. The second degree comprehended the lower class of penitents, properly so called, whom the bishop, at the request of the deacons and of the faithful, had released from their painful and humiliating penance outside the church, and had allowed to go through the regular course of canonical rehabilitation.

They had a place in the interior *narthex*; but as they were separated from the rest by the wall of the church, and were only in communication with them by the three or five gates of this wall, they could see nothing of what was going on, and could only listen to the reading of Holy Scripture, and to the homilies and sermons preached by the sacred ministers.

This was properly the place set apart for catechumens, but where, at times, Jews also, heretics, and schismatics, and even pagans, were allowed to penetrate, to hear the word of the Gospel, that they might be converted, if God deigned to touch their hearts. This stage of penance was called *ἀκρόασις*, “a hearing,” and the penitents of this class were collectively called *audientes*, “hearers.”

When the readings and instructions were over, the



deacon, from an elevated place, bade the "hearers and infidels retire;" where, by the word infidel, are meant all those who had not been baptized.

It would be difficult to say how much such a penance must have told on their feelings. For whereas, on the one hand, the fact of their being commanded to assist at the instructions, was for them equivalent to the reproach that as yet they were ignorant of the rudiments of Christian doctrine, their sudden and untimely exit, on the other, reminded them that, by their crimes, they had been degraded to the level of those who had not yet been favoured with Christian regeneration.

4. After these penitents had spent in this state a number of years corresponding to the grievousness of their sins, they were again admitted to have a place in the church with the faithful, and thus they entered into their third stage of penance. This new class of penitents occupied in the sacred building that space, which was immediately below the *ambones*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *ambones* were high marble pulpits, to which access was given by a flight of steps; hence their derivation, from the Greek word ἀναβαίνειν, to ascend. It was from this place that the deacon sang the Gospel or preached to the people; that the commemoration of the living and the dead, whose names were registered on tablets called δῖπτυχα, *diptychs*, was made; that the days of fasting, vigils, or coming festivals were announced, and generally what notices belonged to the congregation of the parish or diocese. It was also from these pulpits, that the newly converted made their profession of faith. Of the celebrated rhetorician Victorinus, St. Augustine, in the eighth book of his "Confessions," c. ii., says: "When the hour for him to make his profession had come, he pronounced the true faith from a lofty place (*de loco eminentiore*) in presence of the Christian people with a wonderful confidence." Martigny, Dictionnaire, &c.

As soon as the "hearers" had departed, the penitents of this third class prostrated themselves to the ground with sighs and tears, in which the faithful joined. Then, they rose together with the bishop, and received from him the imposition of hands, accompanied with the recitation of some canonical prayers, after which they were bidden to depart from among the faithful, together with those of the catechumens who bore the same name.

They were called *substrati*, or "kneelers," and their degree was styled *ὑπόπτωσις*, "prostration;" and, during this stage of their penance, they had to go through a severe course of private prayers, of fastings and of laborious works.

5. After these, and last in the order of penitents, came the *consistentes*, or "standers," who were indeed allowed to remain in the church during the whole of the liturgy, but who neither could receive the Blessed Eucharist, nor make any offering destined for the Holy Sacrifice or for the immediate maintenance of the divine worship, as did the other faithful. Their stage, from their position, was called *σύστασις*, "a standing."

We have in St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of Neocæsarea, an exact description of these four degrees of penitents. "The *weeping*," says he, "is without the door of the oratory. There the sinner, standing, should beg for himself the prayers of the faithful who go in. The *hearing* is within the door, in the narthex, where it behoves him who has sinned to

stand as long as the catechumens, and thence depart. 'For,' saith he, 'let the hearer of the Scriptures and of the instruction be cast out, and let him not be deemed worthy of praying.' The *kneeling* is this, that, abiding within the church door, he should go out with the catechumens. The *standing* is this, that he should stand with the faithful, and not go out with the catechumens. Lastly, is the participation of the Sacraments."<sup>1</sup>

Here, however, it must be observed that the four stages of penances were exclusively in use in the Oriental churches, for we find no traces thereof in Latin writers. Even in the East learned men make it a question whether they ever represented a universal institution.<sup>2</sup> The Western Church seems to have been animated in her customs and in her rites by a spirit of prudent moderation, rather than of exaggerated zeal.

6. Yet, she too found it necessary to enforce on sinners, whose sins had a public character, and who had thus brought a disgrace on the Christian name and an offence to the purity of the Christian com-

<sup>1</sup> Ἡ πρόσκλαυσις, ἕξω τῆς πύλης τοῦ εὐκτηρίου ἐστίν· ἐνθα ἐστῶτα τὸν ἁμαρτάνοντα, χρὴ τῶν εἰσίωντων δεῖσθαι πιστῶν, ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ εὐχεσθαι· ἡ ἀκράσις ἐνδόθι τῆς πύλης, ἐν τῷ νάρθηκι· ἐνθα ἐστάναι χρὴ τὸν ἡμαρτηκότα, ἕως τῶν κατηχουμένων, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἐξέρχεσθαι· ἀκούων γὰρ, φησὶ, τῶν γραφῶν, καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, ἐκβαλλέσθω, καὶ μὴ ἀξιούσθω προσευχῆς· ἡ δὲ ὑπόπτωσις, ἵνα, ἔσωθεν τῆς πύλης τοῦ ναοῦ ἰστάμενος, μετὰ τῶν κατηχουμένων ἐξέρχεται· ἡ σύστασις, ἵνα συνίσταται τοῖς πιστοῖς, καὶ μὴ ἐξέρχεται μετὰ τῶν κατηχουμένων· τελευταῖον, ἡ μέθεξις τῶν ἁγιασμάτων.—*Can. xi. Moguntiae*, 1655.

<sup>2</sup> Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, Paris, 1889, chap. xv. p. 420, in a note, where he brings the authority of Funk, *Theol. Quartalschrift*, 1866, p. 373, *et seq.*

munity, the imposition of a serious penance, as a condition for their readmission into her bosom and for the participation of her Sacraments and of her graces, to which baptism had been a first initiation. The demand of reintegration—that is to say, of admission among the penitents—was not granted without some difficulty, and it was the rule to grant it once only during life.<sup>1</sup>

The first thing that was required of the penitents was that they should renounce public offices, the ecclesiastical career, or the military state. They could not marry, and if married, they lost their conjugal rights; the men were to have their hair and beard shaved, and the women were to receive the veil of penance; they were to give alms to the poor, and abstain from such pleasures as would otherwise have been allowed; they were to be assiduous to attend in their condition the divine service—in a word, they had to live like monks or nuns. For the monastic state was, then also, a state of penance, with this difference, that the monk had freely embraced it, whereas the penitent was bound to it; the monk could receive holy orders, the penitent could not.

Then, the penitents were left to live in their own houses, without seclusion and without any official supervision; but, after the middle of the fifth century, they were closed up in monasteries for the whole of Lent, and were only released on Maundy Thursday, the day of public reconciliation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Duchesne, *Origines*, chap. xv. p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Canciani, *O. S. M.*, vol. i. p. 220.

In the third century, the Church found herself obliged to submit this matter to a regular legislation. Novatus, a priest of the African Church, and Novatian, a deacon of the Church of Rome, falsely interpreting St. Paul's words to the Hebrews,<sup>1</sup> had taught that, for such as had lost their baptismal grace, penance could afford no remedy. As a protest against such erroneous doctrine, the discipline of penance was carried out in Rome with a special liturgy.

Ash-Wednesday, which was then called "*Caput jejunii aut Quadragesimæ*," *the beginning of fast or of Lent*, was the day chosen for the imposition of public penance. During the days that had immediately preceded, as indeed during the whole period after Septuagesima Sunday—which period received in England the suitable term of "*Shrovetide*,"<sup>2</sup> or confession-time—the penitents had prepared themselves to the reception of public penance, by being shriven or confessing their sins, that is, by the reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

On Ash-Wednesday, therefore, they were solemnly clothed with sackcloth by the priest, and special prayers were made for them.<sup>3</sup> Later on, the custom prevailed for the penitents to receive also on that day ashes on their heads, which custom soon became universal; for we find that Pope St. Gregory the Great established on that day a solemn procession,

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vi. 4, 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> From the Anglo-Saxon *scrifan*, to shrive, to confess.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, i. 16.



*litania*, to the Church of St. Sabina on the Aventine, and chose it for the station of the first day in Lent. He used to betake himself to that church, to preside at the ceremony, receive the ashes, and speak to the people, after the *collecta* or *assembly* had taken place in the Church of St. Anastasia.

A priest, too, was chosen from among the clergy, and appointed over the penitents. He was called "Penitentiary," and his office was to regulate their penitential works. In course of time, when canonical penance fell into disuse, the office of Penitentiary was conferred on that priest, who was intrusted with the power from the bishop to absolve from cases reserved to him. There still exists the office of Cardinal *Major Penitentiary* in the Catholic Church, whose duty is to grant, in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, the power of absolving from cases reserved to him.

7. History has preserved for our edification the memory of some illustrious personages, who gladly went through the ordeal of public penance, as a means of rehabilitation into the Church.

The holy matron Fabiola is one of them. She was a member of the renowned family of the Fabii. In her youth she had married a man of such disorderly manners, that, not being able to live with him, she had left him, and making use of the liberty which civil laws granted her, she had married a second husband.

After the death of the latter she repented, and St.

Jerome<sup>1</sup> tells us in glowing terms what a severe penance she went through.

"She put on sackcloth in order to confess publicly her error, and, in the sight of the whole city of Rome, on Easter Eve, she stood in the ranks of the penitents in the Lateran basilica, while the bishop, the priests, and the whole people were weeping over her : her hair was dishevelled, her face pallid, her hands unadorned, her neck humbly bent. . . .

"O happy penance," exclaims this holy father, "which draws down upon itself the eyes of God, which, with a humble confession of faults, changes His wrathful anger ! . . . She did not disown the Lord on earth, and the Lord will not disown her in heaven. She laid bare her wound before all, and the colourless scar thereof. Rome beheld it weeping. . . .

"She did not enter the Church of the Lord, but sat with Mary, the sister of Moses, separated without the camp, that the priest who had ejected her, might himself call her back. She came down from her throne of delights. 'She took a millstone and ground meal,'<sup>2</sup> and with her bare feet she passed over a torrent of tears. She sat upon coals of fire : these were a help to her. She scourged that face by which she had pleased her second husband ; she abhorred gems ; she could not bear to see fine linen ; she rejected every ornament."

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Oceanum, which is the 30th.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlvii. 2.

Then, St. Jerome passes on to speak with admiration of her profound charity to the poor and of her many pilgrimages. "Had I a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, an iron voice, yet would I be unable to tell, one by one, all the names of physical ailments which Fabiola turned into so many refreshments, to such a point that many healthy poor would envy the condition of the sick.

"She used the same liberality with clerics, monks, and virgins. What monastery is there that has not been maintained by her support? Who among the naked and bedridden has not been clothed by Fabiola? Was there any kind of misery, to whose assistance her liberality did not rush? Rome was too small a place for her merciful compassion. Suddenly, and against the estimation of all, she sailed for Jerusalem, where she was universally welcomed, and where she shared for a little while our own dwelling.

"When I remember her company, it still seems to me I see her as I then saw her. Good Jesus! with what fervour, with what earnestness, she was bent upon the divine Books; and wishing, as it were, to satiate her hunger, she read through the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Psalms, proposing questions, and, when solved, laying them up in her bosom. . . .

"Then she went back to her own country, that she might there live poor, where she had before swum in opulence. She, who had harboured many guests, came to dwell now in a stranger's house; and, under the

eyes of the city of Rome, she came to lavish on the poor what she had sold before all."

Then the holy doctor describes her death and funeral: "Wherefore, as she was ever ready, death could not find her unprepared. Moved by a presentiment of what was coming, she wrote to many monks to come and alleviate her heavy burden, that she might make to herself, from the unjust mammon, friends who would receive her into the eternal dwellings.

"They came; they were made friends. She went down to sleep as she had wished—that is, as a poor woman—and at last, laying aside her burden, she flew up lighter to heaven.

"What a wonder Rome had possessed in the person of the living Fabiola, Rome itself declared it at her death. Hardly had she breathed forth her spirit, hardly had she given back her soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, when already the swiftly-flying fame, har-binger of so much sorrow, summoned together to the obsequies the people of the whole town.

"There were singings of psalms, and the sounds of the joyful hallelujahs shook the gilded roofs of the temples. Here a choir of youths, there a group of old men, were celebrating with verses the praises of the valiant woman and her glorious deeds. Not so, did Furius triumph over the Gauls, Papyrius over the Samnites, Scipio over Numantia, or Pompey over the people of Brutus. Those conquered bodies; she subdued spiritual wickedness.

“Neither the squares, nor the porticoes, nor the roofs above could hold the multitude of spectators. Then did Rome behold all her people gathered together. Each of them individually rejoiced in the glory of the penitent. And what wonder that men exulted at her salvation, when angels rejoiced in heaven at her conversion?”

8. At the same time, that is, about the year 390, we find a similar example of public penance, performed by the Emperor Theodosius the Great. It will throw, we trust, some light on our subject.

The people of Thessalonica in a sedition had massacred some of the Emperor's officers. When Theodosius, who was then at Milan, heard this news, he gave vent to a violent fit of passion; but St. Ambrose succeeded in pacifying him, and the Emperor promised he would forgive the people. Later, however, his officers represented to him that it was important that such excesses should not remain unpunished. They extracted from him an order to put to death the authors of the sedition. This order was executed, but in a most barbarous manner.

While the people were assembled in the circus, the soldiers surrounded it secretly, with orders to seize indiscriminately, up to a certain number, any of those whom they met, whether they were guilty or not, and to put them to death. Scenes of unheard-of barbarity took place. Among others, two brothers



were captured, and their father, to save them, offered the soldiers all the gold he had. They accepted the gold, but answered they could only save one of them at his choice. The miserable father looked at his children in an agony of despair, but could take no resolve. At last they were both slaughtered under his eyes.

When the news reached Milan, St. Ambrose was greatly afflicted. He wrote to the Emperor a letter, in which he represented to him the atrocity which had taken place at Thessalonica. "Sin is only blotted out by tears," said the Bishop. "No angel or archangel can remit it otherwise. The Lord Himself forgives those only who do penance. I counsel thee, I entreat thee, I admonish thee."

The Emperor answered that David had committed adultery and homicide. "Since thou didst imitate his fault," said St. Ambrose, "imitate also his penance." The Emperor submitted, and abstained from entering the church, for the space of eight months.

On Christmas Day, he was shedding tears in his palace, when Ruffinus, the most intimate of his courtiers, asked him the cause. "I weep," said the Emperor, "when I consider that the temple of God is opened to slaves and beggars, and is shut to me, and consequently heaven also."—"I shall go," said Ruffinus, "and beseech the Bishop to absolve thee."—"No," said the Emperor; "I know the justice of his censures, and his respect for the imperial power

will not induce him to do anything against the law of God."

However, Ruffinus went; and Theodosius, buoyed with a hope of pardon, followed closely after him. Ruffinus arrived first, and St. Ambrose protested that he would rather let himself be slain, than admit the Emperor into the church.

Shortly after, Theodosius himself came, though Ruffinus had already reported to him St. Ambrose's answer. He went straight to the Bishop, who was sitting in the atrium, and asked him to give him absolution.

St. Ambrose charged the Emperor that, by such a request, he was standing against God and trampling under foot His laws. "I respect them," said the latter, "nor do I pretend to go into the holy temple against the canons, but I entreat thee to deliver me from these ties, and not to close upon me the doors, which the Lord has opened to those who do penance."—"What penance hast thou done," said St. Ambrose, "for such a sin?"—"It belongs to thee," said the Emperor, "to teach me what I must do." St. Ambrose commanded him to go through the regular course of public penance. The Emperor submitted.

Then the excommunication was taken away from him, and he was allowed entrance into the church. This was a kind of Indulgence, for this release was granted to Theodosius before he had performed any part of his canonical penance. However, he did not

pray standing or kneeling, but, having taken off all his imperial ornaments, he prostrated himself on the ground, saying these words of David, "My soul hath cleaved to the pavement; quicken Thou me, according to Thy word."<sup>1</sup>

Eloquent in its brevity is the eulogium which of this prince's penance St. Augustine has handed down to posterity in his treatise on the City of God.<sup>2</sup> "Was there anything more wonderful than his religious humility, when, by the intrigues of some of his familiars, inveigled into avenging the grievous crime of the Thessalonians, whom he had promised to spare at the intercession of the Bishop, and chastened by the discipline of the Church, he so did penance, that the people would rather pray, and shed tears over his imperial majesty, thus prostrate, than they would fear to provoke his anger by their crimes." And of the Indulgence which had been granted him by the Church he kept a grateful remembrance. For the same St. Augustine<sup>3</sup> tells us that when the sons of his enemies, who were as yet pagans, flew to the church for refuge, he would induce them to become Christians, loved them with true Christian charity, and instead of depriving them of their goods, he conferred upon them honours and dignities.

We have thought it advisable to relate these examples of public penance, that it may be seen what a view the Church takes of sin, and how she

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. v. chap. xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Eod. loc.*

interprets the divine precept of penance, as a means of rehabilitation into God's friendship.

9. The ceremony for the imposition of penance, was substantially similar to that which is found now-a-days in the Pontificale Romanum under the rubric "De Expulsione publice pœnitentium ab Ecclesia in feria quarta Cinerum," and for which the "Commination Service," directed to be performed on the first day of Lent, by the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, is but a paltry imitation, and a still poorer substitution.

Yet it would be a most grievous error to imagine with Erasmus,<sup>1</sup> that, at the time to which our narrative refers, public penance was the only one in use in the Church, and that private penance was only introduced later, viz., at a time when, according to Erasmus, the Church instituted the secret confession of sins. It is no difficult matter to evince the falseness of the statement. What the ancient fathers of the Church called secret *exomologesis*,<sup>2</sup> is nothing else than secret confession; and as the public exomologesis entailed the performance of a public penance, so did the private exomologesis entail the performance of a private penance (*pœnitentia absconsa*).<sup>3</sup>

The great Doctor of the Church of Alexandria, and the faithful mouthpiece of the traditions of the Church in the first century of her existence, Origen,

<sup>1</sup> In his notes to the above-quoted letter of St. Jerome to Oceanus.

<sup>2</sup> This word derives its origin from the passage of St. Matthew iii. 6 and Mark i. 5: 'Ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν.

<sup>3</sup> Du Cange, at the word "Pœnitentia."

surnamed the *Adamantine* for his application to study and the firmness which he displayed in confessing Christ in the midst of torments, thus speaks of confession: "Consider what the Scripture says about it, that one must not keep secret his iniquity, and conceal it interiorly. And as those, whom some indigestible food or the abundance of bilious matter has rendered heavy and languid, feel a relief in rejecting the noxious element, so those who have sinned, if they conceal and retain their sins within themselves, are inwardly oppressed, and, as it were, suffocated by the disorderly elements of sin; but if they become their own accusers, not only do they vomit up their crimes, but also consume every cause of sickness in themselves."<sup>1</sup>

Of St. Ambrose, Paulinus narrates, that whenever any one confessed his sins to him, to obtain the pardon thereof, he was struck with so great compassion in the innermost part of his heart, that, weeping over the sins he had heard, he would so touch the penitent's feelings, as to move him to tears. Now this could be but a secret confession of sins, for Paulinus adds that St. Ambrose would never reveal to any one the sins which he had heard in confession, except to God, with whom he interceded for the penitent sinner; thus leaving to his successors in the priesthood a striking example, to be rather intercessors before God, than accusers

<sup>1</sup> Second Homily on the 37th Psalm.



before men.<sup>1</sup> But this is not the place to speak dogmatically of secret confession.

As for private penance, Tertullian supplements the evidence of Origen. "Some," says he, "flee from the exercises of penance or defer them, because they consider them as a defamation, caring more about their honour than about their salvation; not unlike those who, having contracted hidden maladies, dare not discover them to physicians, but rather expose themselves to death through that miserable shame."<sup>2</sup>

Secret penance existed, then, as also secret confession; and as there was the solemn absolution, so was there also the private absolution.

In fact, the *solemn* absolution was only given at the end of the penitential term, which lasted sometimes, as we have seen, for several years. Now, we know from the testimony of Innocent I., St. Jerome, and others, as also from the authority of the Council of Agde, celebrated in 506,<sup>3</sup> that it was customary for penitents to be admitted yearly to Communion. Unless, therefore, we admit that penitents went to

<sup>1</sup> See Baronius, tom. iv. A.D. 375, n. 25. Grave authors are of opinion that the humble posture which accompanied this form of *exomologesis*, and which, according to Tertullian (*De Pœnit.*, ix.), consisted in kneeling in front of the priest (*presbyteris advolvi et caris Dei adgeniculari*), gave rise, on the part of the pagans, to the gross calumny, which Minucius Felix, in his book "*Octavius*," relates: "*Alii eos (christianos) ferunt ipsius antistitis ac sacerdotis colere genitalia, et quasi parentis sui adorare naturam.*"—*Paulo, post init.* Of course, the unscrupulous pagans were glad to find a pretext to charge the Christians with an action, which was to them familiar: "*Ille, qui de adoratis sacerdotis virilibus adversum nos fabulatur, tentat in nos conferre quæ sua sunt.*" *Ante fin.*

<sup>2</sup> *De Pœnit.*, c. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See Bellarmine, tom. iii. p. 960, par. 1613.

receive Holy Communion unabsolved—which two things are, in the teaching of St. Paul and in the practice of the Church, incompatible—we must acknowledge that a *private* absolution was given them, previous to their receiving Holy Communion. We have already said that Shrovetide was the time set apart for the performing of private penance, and the first day in Lent for the imposition of public penance.

10. Moreover, it should be observed that public penance was inflicted only for public crimes, and when the culprit had juridically been found guilty, as we gather from several passages of St. Augustine.<sup>1</sup> Neither was it universally applied in a like manner. The Church deemed it a prudent course, to leave it to the discretion of the bishops to enforce the penitential canons as they should judge best, according to the different circumstances of time, place, and persons.

Some, too, would naturally be dispensed, as children, and in general those whom their age, or their state of health, or their condition of life did not enable to bear much fatigue; married persons, whose sins might thus have been revealed to their consorts. However, such as these were not, on that account, dispensed from going through a course of penitential exercises in private, as much as their state would allow them.

11. Another particular remark to be made on this

<sup>1</sup> Notably from the 351st Sermon, c. iv. n. 10.

subject is, that, in those centuries of fervour, many among the faithful spontaneously condemned themselves to this painful exercise, not for any grievous sin that they might have committed, but merely out of a spirit of humility and love of God. They were then mixed with the juridical penitents, and with them went through the regular course. Hence public penance was no revelation of secret sins, as it was impossible to distinguish those who were really guilty from those who were innocent; unless, of course, the sins of the former had been previously made public by them.

In confirmation of this truth, Martigny<sup>1</sup> quotes from M. de Boissieu the following inscription of the year 520, found in Lyons in 1857:—

IN HOC TVMVLO REQUIISCET BO  
NAE MEMORIA CARVSA RELIGIO  
SA QVI EGIT PENETENTIAM  
ANNVS VIGENTI ET DVOS ET VIXE  
IN PACE ANNVS SEXAGENTA QVI  
NQVE OBIET DIAE XIII KALENOC  
TVBRS RVSTIANO ET VITALIANO V CL

“In this tomb rests Carusa of happy memory, a religious woman, who did penance twenty-two years, and lived in peace sixty-five years. She died on the 13th of the Calends of October, Rustianus and Vitalianus being consuls.”

12. Maundy Thursday in the West, and Good Friday, or even Holy Saturday, in the East, were the days consecrated for the reconciliation of penitents to the Church. These days were chosen

<sup>1</sup> Dictionnaire des Antiquités, etc., at the word “Pénitence canonique.”

to enable the penitents to partake of the Blessed Eucharist on Easter Sunday. For, "every time," says St. Ambrose,<sup>1</sup> "our sins are forgiven us, we take the Sacrament of the Body of our Saviour, to show that it is in virtue of His Blood, that the remission of sins is granted."

The reconciliation of penitents to the Church was considered as a second initiation, or a second baptism. This is confirmed by the coincidence of the two ceremonies, at the most solemn epoch of the year, viz., that of our Saviour's Resurrection. To the bishop alone belonged the right of solemnly reconciling sinners; but, as the 32nd canon of the Council of Elvira<sup>2</sup> has it, in danger of death this power was extended to the simple priest, and in his absence to the deacon himself.

On that occasion, the penitent received from the bishop the Bill of Penance, *λίβελλον μετανοίας*, a kind of certificate, attesting that he had regularly gone through his period of penitential exercises, and had been absolved from excommunication.<sup>3</sup> And if, at times, a penitent died before his reconciliation had taken place, it was lawful to offer for him the Divine Sacrifice, because he *had fulfilled his penance*.<sup>4</sup>

The ceremony of reconciliation, which is still pre-

<sup>1</sup> De Pœnit., l. ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> It took place A.D. 305. It contains eighty-one canons of discipline, and is, of all the Councils, the most ancient which has handed down to us penitentiary canons.

<sup>3</sup> Anastasius Bibliothecarius, quoted by Maigne d'Arnis, *Lexicon Manuale*, &c., at the word "Pœnitentia."

<sup>4</sup> Conc. Carthag., iv. c. 79.

served in substance in the Pontificale Romanum,<sup>1</sup> breathes throughout a spirit of the purest charity. It is the outbreak of joy and gladness on the part of the father, for the happy return of the long-sighed-for prodigal son, and on the other hand an assurance that he is well fit to put on again his first robe and partake of the fatted calf, and make all merry by his presence; for the Church, like God Himself, “desires not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”<sup>2</sup>

“Be silent, hear most attentively,” said the archdeacon to the barefooted penitents prostrate on the ground, before the gate of the church. Then, turning to the bishop: “This is, venerable pontiff,” he adds, “the acceptable time; this is the day of divine propitiation and of human salvation, in which death has had an end, and life eternal a beginning. For, although there is no time in which the riches of the goodness and mercy of God are closed, yet the remission of sins is now more abundant through His indulgence; and more copious, through grace, is now the assumption of those who are born again.”

After this, the ancient ceremonial directed the faithful present to prostrate themselves three times and invoke the Divine mercy. Then the archdeacon,

<sup>1</sup> It is a remarkable fact that the Book of Common Prayer, whilst it invented the Communion Service as a substitute for the old ceremony, “De Expulsione,” &c., of the Pontificale Romanum, has nothing to replace the touching Ordo, “De Reconciliatione,” although it adds that the restoration of public penance is “much to be wished.”

<sup>2</sup> Ez. xxxiii. 11.



addressing the assembly, invited them to sing with him the prayer of Indulgence, which was a kind of litany in this wise :—

We beseech Thee, O Lord	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it come down from the Most High	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it succour us miserable	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it cleanse us from all sins	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it be shown to penitents	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it be a patron to mourners	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it correct those who wander in the faith	. . . . .	Indulgence !
May it raise up those who have fallen by sin	. . . . .	Indulgence !
We beseech Thee, O Lord	. . . . .	Indulgence !

This litany was repeated three times, between each of which special prayers were recited.<sup>1</sup>

Then the penitents were again introduced into the church, and the solemn sentence of absolution was pronounced by the bishop : “ May the Almighty God absolve you from all bond of sins, that you may have life eternal and live, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” Some more prayers were added to ask God to grant these penitents the gift of perseverance.

13. Of the benefit of this solemn reconciliation, as indeed of canonical penance also, were deprived those who, a second time, having fallen unfortunately into any grievous sin, had again been cut off from the communion of the faithful ; for the one and the other, as we have said, were granted but once.<sup>2</sup>

They could only be reconciled privately, and

<sup>1</sup> Duchesne, *Origines*, &c., pp. 427, 428.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xv., in the beginning.

at the time of death. Some exaggerated canons went so far as to forbid expressly, even then, the reconciliation and absolution of sinners, thus abandoning them to the sincerity of their own sorrow and to the mercy of God. But such canons never obtained the explicit approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff, but rather his formal disapproval, as we gather from the Decretal of Innocent I. to Exuperius of Toulouse, and that of Celestine I. to the Bishops of the provinces of Vienne and Narbonne.

Even the use of denying Holy Communion to sinners at the end of their lives, as we find it expressed in several canons of the Council of Elvira,<sup>1</sup> has never been anything more than a local custom. The general practice of the Catholic Church is, on the contrary, well set forth in the 13th canon of the first General Council, that of Nice.

“With regard to the dying, let the ancient and canonical law be observed; so that if any one is about to depart this life, he will not be deprived of the last viaticum, which is of so great necessity. And if he, having thus received Communion in that extreme danger, recover his health, he will be with those who are only partakers of prayer,” that is to say, the *consistentes*. “In general, with regard to all the dying who ask for the participation of the Eucharist, the Bishop will grant it after examination.”<sup>2</sup> And Pope Innocent I.: “If there be any danger of

<sup>1</sup> Notably those regarding the crime of idolatry, of apostasy from the faith, of adultery, and homicide.

<sup>2</sup> Mansi, t. ii. p. 674.

death, he (the penitent) must be absolved before Easter, lest he die without Communion.”<sup>1</sup>

We see by this law how justly the Sovereign Pontiff Pius VI., in his Constitution *Auctorem Fidei*, of the 28th August 1794, condemned as perverse in its import, the proposition which had been uttered by that gathering already spoken of, which made a desperate effort to revive the dying embers of Jansenism, the pseudo-Council of Pistoia, and by which it maintained that “the fear of perpetual exclusion from Communion and from peace, even at the hour of death, acts as a powerful curb on those who little consider the evil of sin, and fear it less.”<sup>2</sup>

14. Such, then, was the practice of the Church with regard to Penance, considered as a part of that hearty sorrow, which is an essential condition for the recovery of baptismal innocence. If we have dwelt on this point of primitive discipline longer than had at first been our intention, and the nature of this work demanded, it must not be thought that we have done so, as if regretting overmuch the practical absence, in the present state of the Church, of these penitential canons, and, as it were, bewailing a notable decline in the fervour of charity and in the purity of faith.

Satisfactory Penance is not essentially Canonical Penance. The former has ever existed in the Catholic Church; the latter had a temporary existence.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Decent.

<sup>2</sup> N. 38.

From the beginning of the Church there have been men, who have freely chosen, both in public and in private, a state of humiliation and suffering, and the latter ages have furnished us unrivalled examples of extreme austerities. From St. Mary Magdalene, the penitent whom Jesus loved, to St. Joseph Labre, the wonder of our age, the Church numbers an uninterrupted list of such heroes, who willingly gave themselves up to a life of most painful exercises, whether to atone for their own sins, or to make compensation for sins which they knew not. And what are religious orders, but schools of penance in all its varied aspects and most recondite regions?

Satisfactory Penance is of Divine institution,<sup>1</sup> and therefore cannot cease to exist in the Church. But Canonical Penance is only a human institution, and therefore its fortune is subject to the variations which time, place, and other circumstances demand. To decide when and where and to what extent it should be applied, is the office of the Church, which is the "house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth,"<sup>2</sup> which has received as an inheritance the cloak of Christ and His Spirit—that is to say, "His mind."<sup>3</sup>

It is not altogether impossible that the Church

<sup>1</sup> This we advance on the authority of our Lord in St. Matt. xii. 41 : "The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here." For examples of public and private penitents, see "The Text Book of Holy Scripture," by Rev. K. Vaughan. Cf. the article "An Italian Lourdes," by D. Bede Camm, O.S.B., *The Month*, January 1895.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

should reinforce some one of the ancient canons. But there is, we think, a great deal of truth in the witty observation of Perrone,<sup>1</sup> that such as unduly extol the primeval discipline of the Church, and take pleasure in running down that which now exists, seek by this means to exonerate themselves from the one and the other—from the ancient discipline which no longer exists, and from the new which they despise.

This, we reckon, is the case with the Prayer-Book of the Church of England, which, while expressing in the Communion Service a yearning for the ancient penitential discipline, in the 13th Article does not recoil from the inconsiderate proposition, that “works”—*and consequently works of penance*—“done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God; . . . yea, rather, for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.”

15. Now, examining the practice of the Church in this epoch, we find that, as early as the fourth century, the bishops had the power to shorten, at their discretion, the period of penance, nay, even at times, to allow the penitents to pass straight from the degree of *hearers* to that of *standers*, without having to remain any length of time among the *kneelers*. This was indeed a great concession, for the stage of penance to which the *kneelers* were

<sup>1</sup> Tractatus de Pœnit., &c., cap. xv. in fine.



submitted was the longest, and sometimes lasted fifteen years.<sup>1</sup>

We find this power mentioned as a matter of fact in the 11th and 12th canons of the Council of Nice (325). It is said that according to the fervour with which a man shall have received the penance enjoined him, it is in the power of the bishop to grant him the Indulgence, so that he may be released from performing the whole time prescribed to him.<sup>2</sup>

The same had been previously mentioned in the Council of Ancyra,<sup>3</sup> which was celebrated about the year 314. "We decree," it is said in the 5th Canon, "that the bishops, having considered the conduct of the penitents' lives, be empowered to show mercy, or to lengthen the time of penance. Above all, let their former and subsequent life be examined, and thus lenity will be shown unto them."

Later, the Council of Lerida (524) gave to the bishops a similar direction; and St. Basil, in his letter to Amphilochius, had already said that "he who has the power of binding and loosing, can lessen the time of penance to the truly contrite."

Now, such a power was not, at that time, a new introduction in the Church. It had existed long

<sup>1</sup> See Eusebius (H. E. v. 32), who brings an instance of the complete remission of a canonical penance which otherwise would have had to be performed before absolution.

<sup>2</sup> "Ὅσοι καὶ φόβῳ καὶ δάκρυσι καὶ ὑπομονῇ καὶ ἀγαθοεργίαις τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν ἔργῳ καὶ οὐ σχήματι ἐπιδείκνυνται, οὗτοι πληρώσαντες τὸν χρόνον τὸν ὠρισμένον τῆς ἀκροάσεως, εἰκότως τῶν εὐχῶν κοινωνήσουσι, μετὰ τοῦ ἐξεῖναι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ φιλανθρωπότερόν τι περὶ αὐτῶν βουλευσασθαι. Can. xii., Mansi, t. ii. p. 673.

<sup>3</sup> 2nd and 5th Canons. Ibid. pp. 514, 515.

before, for these authorities testify to existing facts. Nay, as, on the one hand, no trace is assigned of the introduction of such a practice, and, on the other, no protestation is known to have ever been made against it, there is no reason why we should not trace it back as far as the time of the Apostles.

This fact shows not merely that the Church dispensed the sinner from going through the ordeal of penances which she herself had appointed—for such an action, as has been noticed, would result in nothing less than a deception and a mockery—but that, out of the plenitude of her power, she curtailed before God and before men, and sometimes remitted altogether, a satisfaction which had already been more than sufficiently paid by Christ and His saints. This is evident from the contemporary writings of the Fathers on this subject, and particularly of St. Cyprian.

16. In subsequent ages, we find bishops using with apostolic liberty this power of reconciling the penitents to the Church before their term was fulfilled.

In the time of St. Ambrose, the Church of Milan had so been infected with the Arian heresy, that hardly could a few Christians be found whose faith was untainted, and who openly acknowledged Christ as the true consubstantial Son of God. And so, when the Arians returned to the true faith (about 375), the holy bishop found it necessary to shorten for them their stage of penance, nay, to lay open to them the gates of the Church, otherwise his flock would have

been composed exclusively of penitents. Such a condescension on his part drew upon him the backbitings of slanderous tongues, accusing him of prodigality in the concession of ecclesiastical indulgence. The same thing happened later to St. Gregory Nazianzen, Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

In Africa, the Church had been laid waste by the schism of the Donatists. When a temporary peace was granted, the African bishops, anxious to provide for the unity of the Church, assembled in national Council at Carthage (401), and drew up letters to Pope Anastasius and to the other bishops of Italy, regarding the Indulgence to be given to those of the Donatists who came back to the Church. The purport of the letter was, that if it appeared seemly to the bishops, they should, for the reason given above, receive them without prejudice to the dignity and to the exercise of the orders which they possessed before their readmission. And St. Augustine tells us that these intentions were put in execution.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the very act of entering again the Catholic Church, the self-imposed humiliation of acknowledging error, the joy of the saints on earth, and the rejoicings of angels in heaven, were sufficient motives for the pastors of the Church to supersede the long course of penitential exercises, and to supply them by the never failing satisfactions of Christ and of His saints.

<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose, *de Pœnit.*, l. ii. c. 7, 8. Cf. Baronius, A.D. 375, n. 25, t. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Cresconium*, l. ii. c. 11 and 12. Cf. Baronius, A.D. 401, n. 14, t. v.

Another motive for granting this relaxation to penitents was the approach of a persecution. It was but meet that they should then be in communion with the Church and fortified by the prayers of the faithful. "Not to those that are infirm," says St. Cyprian, "but to the healthy, the peace of reconciliation is necessary; not to the dying, but to the living it must be extended, in order that those whom we incite to battle be not left without arms, but be fortified by the Body and Blood of Christ. For, since the object of the Holy Eucharist is to give strength to those that receive it, they must not be deprived of its support whom we would guard against the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

So also when a penitent was in danger of death, the penance was remitted him, but only on condition that he departed this life. If he recovered, he must submit to the penitential canons according to the priest's direction. "If any one," says the IVth Council of Carthage, "after having, by the testimony of others, implored forgiveness, be in imminent danger of death, let him be reconciled by the imposition of hands and receive the Eucharist. If he survive, let him be informed that his petition has been complied with, and then be subject to the appointed rules of penance, so long as it shall seem good to the priest who prescribed the penance."<sup>2</sup>

17. It was necessary to dwell at some length on this ancient practice of canonical penances, because

<sup>1</sup> Ep. lvii.

<sup>2</sup> Can. 76, Mansi, t. iii. p. 957.

it is to this institution that we must appeal, if we wish to understand rightly the nature and the extent of an Indulgence. The nature—for an Indulgence is but a substitution for this canonical penance, both in the sight of the Church and in the sight of God. The extent—for if we speak of an Indulgence of forty days, of seven, ten, or twenty years, it is only with reference to the ancient penances of forty days, of seven, ten, or twenty years.

An Indulgence of one year is not, therefore, the shortening, by one year, of the penalty in Purgatory, as many imagine it to be ; but it is truly a substitution for one year of the ancient canonical penances ; and as the canonical penances were a substitution for so much penalty to be inflicted by God, either in this life or in the next, so one year's Indulgence discharges a man from a corresponding penalty which God might inflict upon him in this world or in the next.

But God alone knows what this penalty should be, because He alone is capable of perfectly gauging the depth of the malice of sin, and measuring the debt proportionate to the offence. No man, therefore, can know with precision to what an abridgment of his temporal penalty corresponds the Indulgence he has gained. Our reckoning on this matter can only have a relative value, not an absolute exactness. That is to say—if one hundred days' Indulgence is capable of cancelling so much of our debt, two hundred days will cancel twice as much ; but what



is the first quantity is not known, except to the all-seeing God.

But we have yet to see, in the history of the Church, clearer and more convincing instances, in favour of the tradition of Indulgences. The history of the "Lapsed," while it will illustrate our subject, will be a link between the apostolic times which we have examined, and that glorious epoch when peace was restored to the Church.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAPSED

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."*—GAL. vi. 1.

#### FROM THE SECOND TO THE FOURTH CENTURY

Christ and the pagan Divinities—The origin of Idolatry—Its malice—Its extension in the first centuries of the Church—The book "Octavius" of Minucius Felix—Idolatry and the times of Persecution—Snares laid for the Christians—The persecution of Decius—The defections—Different kinds of Lapsed—Conditions for re-admission—The "Libellus Martyrum"—It was an Indulgence strictly so called—St. Cyprian, Novatian, and Felicissimus—St. Cyprian's book "De Lapsis"—SS. Marcellus and Eusebius—Charity of the Christians for the dead.

1. THE principal object of our Blessed Saviour's coming into this world, was the restoration of His Divine Father's kingdom. This kingdom is a monarchy, and indeed an absolute monarchy.

The evil one had sown dissension in this kingdom. He had divided it, and set up a host of petty princes instead of the one mighty King. But this was a work of treachery and of lies, for of him it is written that "he was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father thereof."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 44.

But "for this was Christ born, and for this came He into the world, that He should give testimony to the truth."<sup>1</sup> And the truth was life eternal, and "this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."<sup>2</sup> And so the Church, founded by Christ in order to continue that work which He had begun on earth, had to assert and defend the existence of one only true God against the hundreds of gods and goddesses, with whom pagan superstition had peopled Olympus.

It was not so much by an open and bold strife against her enemies, that the Church asserted her mission, as by insinuating herself gently into the more refined and logical sentiments of the people, and stealing imperceptibly upon their higher and more sober affections. For, the existence of one only Supreme God is not a dogma of faith only, but it is also imperiously demanded by reason; and the heart of man was not made to be divided into thousands of different and often unlawful affections.

Thus, then, the Church, taking for her motto those words of Isaias the Prophet, "Return, ye transgressors, to the heart,"<sup>3</sup> taught men that they could be twice themselves, if only they acknowledged the existence of one only Supreme Being, the Ruler above all. Thus did St. Paul insinuate the truth of the Christian religion and the existence of one only God, in the midst of the refined Areopagites, by appealing to the better sentiments of their hearts, of which

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xlvi. 8.

that altar, which they had dedicated to the Unknown God, was a striking expression.<sup>1</sup>

2. It was not, however, that idolatry had struck but small roots and so could easily be defeated. Idolatry was of long standing. It was almost as ancient as the world. Writers are at variance whether it already existed before the Deluge; but one thing is certain, and this is, that after the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of families, men gradually forgot the teachings of their ancestors, and fell, generally speaking, into a state of gross ignorance and savage barbarity.

Yet, idolatry never became altogether universal. "The nations," says St. Augustine, "have never fallen into the worship of false gods to such an extent, as to lose the belief in the existence of one only God, by whom every natural thing has been formed."<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, how could St. Paul have called men "inexcusable because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God?"<sup>3</sup>

Idolatry sprung from ignorance. Men witnessed life and motion in the different parts of the world. They saw the regular succession of days and nights, of seasons and years, the budding forth at stated times of shrubs and plants, the running of waters, the motion of planets. Of these phenomena they ignored the cause; and so they imagined the whole

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> "Gentes non usque adeo ad falsos deos sunt delapsæ, ut opinionem amitterent unius veri Dei, ex quo omnis qualiscumque natura."—C. Faust. Man. c. 20, n. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 20, 21.

world to be peopled with ruling gods and protecting goddesses, issued by birth from the Supreme Being, or related to Him by kindred or friendship.

And thus the different parts of the world were ruled by genii; the woods were presided over by fauns, the fountains by naiads; houses were protected by the Penates; banquets took place under the auspices of Bacchus surrounded by satyrs, whilst in the starry host of heaven were personified a multitude of deities typical alike of vice and virtue, of truth and untruth, of honesty and injustice.

Another cause of idolatry, perhaps the primary cause, was the worship which men were wont to give to their dead friends or relatives. "For a father," says the Book of Wisdom,<sup>1</sup> "being afflicted with bitter grief, made to himself the image of his son who was quickly taken away; and him, who then had died as a man, he began now to worship as a god, and appointed him rites and sacrifices among his servants. Then in process of time, wicked custom prevailing, this error was kept as a law, and statues were worshipped by the commandment of tyrants. And to the worshipping of these, the singular diligence also of the artificer helped to set forward the ignorant. For he, being willing to please him that employed him, laboured with all his art to make the resemblance in the best manner. And the multitude of men, carried away by the beauty of the work, took him now for a god, that but a little before was honoured as a man."

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xiv. 15-20.



From the worship of those who had once dwelt on this earth, men passed on to the worship of imaginary deities who had no existence outside their mind. The anxiety of countenancing, by a supreme sanction, even their vilest desires, made them invent and create a host of gods and goddesses, who, by personifying the passions of the human heart, justified any sinful deed, and cleared from the imputation of guilt even the most abominable crimes. And thus mythology was formed into a regular system, elaborate in its constitution, but meeting every imaginable case of right and wrong.

The growth of civilisation put no check to the progress of mythology ; on the contrary, it increased it greatly. For, to these empty divinities solemn festivals, both of a religious and civil character, were instituted. There was no need of any law to enforce the observance of them ; their character had enough attraction for the human heart and for human passions. And in this, they were different from the feasts of the Jews, which were of a more serious nature, and had about them an aspect of austerity and constraint. In his own days, Tacitus expressed a proud disesteem for the festivals of the Jews, because less joyful than those of the Pagans.<sup>1</sup>

3. St. Thomas, speaking on the subject of idolatry,<sup>2</sup> passes in review the different ways in which the Pagans attributed divine worship to false deities.

<sup>1</sup> Hist. l. v. c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Sum. Theol. II. II. quæst. 74, a. 1.

Sometimes, in their mind, this honour was paid to the very matter out of which the idol had been made, wood, stone, and the like. And so, they mistook the destination of an image, which is that it should represent the person of whom it is an image, and that it should convey to that person any honour or any worship which may be given to it. But oftener, the intention of the Pagans was to worship some being which was represented by the image. This being might be a man who had made himself conspicuous in civil or military achievements, Hercules or Romulus, Æneas or Numa Pompilius. And as these were mere creatures, this worship was nothing short of idolatry. Not unfrequently, the worship was directed to evil spirits dwelling in those statues of which they had taken possession, and out of which they uttered their answers or expressed their will; while some among the Pagans meant thereby to honour God, but a god after their own fashion, a god whom they imagined to be the soul of the world, giving life and motion to all, a part of which must be included in the statue before them.

But all these errors had one common origin—the light-mindedness and vanity of men. “All men are vain,” says the Book of Wisdom,<sup>1</sup> “in whom there is not the knowledge of God, and who, by these good things that are seen, could not understand Him that is, neither by attending to the work have acknowledged who was the workman. But have imagined

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xiii. 1–5.

either the fire or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty, if they, being delighted, took them to be gods, let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they: for the first author of beauty made all those things. Or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them that He that made them is mightier than they: for by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby."

4. At the time when our Blessed Saviour came into this world, and in the subsequent three centuries, civilisation was in its apogee, and so also was idolatry. It had filtered itself into the manners and usages of the people. It had become an essential part of civil and military professions. It was the promoter and supporter of fine arts. It was the sole inspiration of the literature of the day. It had become part of the language. A man swore by Jupiter and protested by Bacchus. The force of these proverbial and exclamatory expressions, which now-a-days are but unmeaning forms, was then connected with a firm belief in Pagan divinities. Tertullian, in his book *de Idololatria*, describes emphatically the appalling proportions which the superstitious worship of false gods had taken in his time.

Whilst the Church was left in peace by the

Emperors of Rome, it was relatively easy for the Christians to abstain from idolatrous worship. There was a free intercourse between them and the Pagans, and often such friendly relations, that the Fathers of the Church assumed the task of moderating them, lest the Christians should suffer in their faith and in the practice of their religion by too much contact with Pagans. Tertullian in his book *ad Uxorem*, which he composed whilst still a Catholic, and which may be said to be his testament to his wife, counsels her, should he die first, not to marry again; and if she *will* marry, not to take a heathen for her husband; otherwise he will stand in her way, and prevent her, by his insinuations, from practising her religion.

Yet, we cannot help observing that this free intercourse between Christians and Pagans was the means destined by God and prepared by Him to enlighten the Gentiles, and dissipate in their minds those dark prejudices which the enemies of the Christian name were eager to disseminate and foster against the Church of Christ and her members.

5. Among the books which the Fathers of the Church of that time have left us, there is perhaps none which illustrates better the nature of these relations, together with the impious practices of paganism and the absurd calumnies spread about against the Christians, than that written by Minucius Felix and bearing the title *Octavius*.

This celebrated jurisconsult had left the Pagan worship and embraced the Christian religion. He

had two friends, Cecilius Natalis and Januarius Octavius. Cecilius dwelt with him in the same house in Rome, but was a Pagan; and, although endowed with an upright heart and a mind accessible to truth, yet he had the greatest horror for the Christian religion and her practices. Octavius, on the contrary, was a fervent Christian. The office he held as a lawyer had obliged him to leave Rome; but one year, during the autumn holidays, he came and spent some time with his friend in the capital of the empire.

One morning they proposed to start off to Ostia, and there enjoy the country and sea-bathing. Whilst walking together, they came to a statue of Serapis, and Cecilius gave it a kiss as a sign of homage. Octavius was offended at this act, and, turning to Minucius, ironically rebuked him for having a friend who, even in the light of day, could not help stumbling against a stone. This cutting remark pierced Cecilius to the quick; and he bitterly complained of the words of insult addressed to him, especially, he added, as he could far better defend his religion than Octavius could his own.

The incident naturally gave rise to a hot discussion between the two friends, and Minucius offered to act as arbiter. Cecilius, in a resenting tone, repeated one by one all the accusations which were then commonly formulated against the Christians: the mysterious signs, the adoration of an ass's head, the killing and eating of a child, to say nothing



of the more monstrous crimes which decency forbids even to mention.<sup>1</sup> Then, he added, the Christians have no God whom they may show, no temple, no image; they adore the vague phantom of an all-knowing and seeing God, and they sacrifice the present, which is certain, for the delusion of imaginary future goods which they expect at the hands of this shadow of their God. These imputations forcibly remind one of the accusations which it was, of late, the fashion to direct against the practices of the Catholic Church.

However, it was no difficult task for Octavius to refute these accusations, and to show how the hundreds of gods forged on the anvil of mythology, are in open contradiction with the unity which both science and nature—to say nothing of revelation—peremptorily proclaim concerning the Supreme Being. Then he examined the origin of idolatry, and recognised the presence of devils in the great host of Pagan gods, since they are bound to obey the voice of Christians when they are bidden to depart in the name of the one only God.

So well did Octavius speak, that Cecilius confessed himself overpowered by the soundness of his reasoning, and he, too, embraced the Christian religion. The matter of this conversation was by Minucius committed to writing, and forms the substance of the book *Octavius* which we have mentioned above.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Morini, O.S.M., *Origini del Culto alla Addolorata*. Rome, 1893, p. 32.

6. Such were, in time of peace, the relations which existed between the Christians and the heathens. But this friendly intercourse grew cold, if it did not altogether cease to exist, in the times of persecutions. Indeed, it is not easy to conceive rightly what was then the condition of Christians with reference to Pagans and to the worship of idols. The followers of Christ were then universally despised, as an irreligious, unreasonable caste of people, fit only to burn on the altar of the gods, in place of that incense which they persistently refused to offer.

With regard to their being persecuted, much depended on the wording of the imperial edicts. But, even such edicts were susceptible of many and various applications, according as the prefects in the various provinces of the empire were eager or not to exercise severity on the Christians. Thus, while on the one hand, some particular Church might enjoy relative peace, on the other, the Christian world at large being in the meantime exposed to hard trials and unending sufferings even in times of peace, there were some provinces in which, owing to the zeal of petty prefects, the Christians were sought and put to death.

7. Some Emperors, of a more refined cruelty, studied the means of putting the consciences of Christians to the torture, before they had the pleasure of seeing them writhing with sufferings on the rack.

Julian the Apostate excelled above all others. It was an old custom to adore not only the Emperors,

but also their images, and this adoration was nothing but a civil honour, with no reference to religion. These images were ordinarily accompanied with trophies, captives or other similar indifferent figures. But Julian added to his own images some idols, in order that ordinary honour might not be given them without idolatry. There was Jupiter in the act of coming forth from heaven and presenting him with the crown and purple; Mars and Mercury, who looked at him with complacency, as if to give testimony to his valour and to his eloquence.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, Theodoret, and Sozomenus tell us of another stratagem used by the renegade Emperor to detect Christians and put their faith to the test.

It was the custom that, on some occasions, the Emperor, sitting on an elevated throne, should distribute largesses to his troops, giving them golden coins according to their rank and merit. Julian added an extraordinary ceremony. He had an altar placed near him on which were burning coals, and ordered that each soldier should put incense thereon before receiving his gold. Those who were warned escaped the snare by feigning an illness; others, through fear or love of money, yielded to the temptation: the greater part did not notice the artifice.

It once happened that several of these were sitting at meat together. Being about to drink, they invoked the name of Jesus Christ, as they were wont to

do, by lifting their eyes to heaven and making on the cup the sign of the cross. One of their companions expressed astonishment at this. "What," said he, "you have renounced Jesus Christ, and now do you invoke Him?"—"What is this thou sayest?" replied the others; "what meanest thou?"—"Because you have put incense on the fire," he replied. On hearing this, they tore their hair, uttering great cries; then they rose from table, and ran in the public square transported with zeal, saying aloud, "We are Christians in our hearts. Let every one hear it, and God in the first place, to whom we live and for whom we will die. We have not deceived Thee, Lord Jesus, we have not renounced the blessed confession; if the hand has failed, the heart did not follow; the Emperor deceived us; we renounce impiety; we will expiate it with our blood."

Then they ran to the palace, and flinging at the Emperor's feet the gold they had received, they exclaimed, "Thou hast not made us a present; thou hast condemned us to death; spare us; immolate us to Jesus Christ; throw us into the fire; cut off our guilty hands, and give to others thy accursed gold."

The Emperor became so angry at their boldness, that in the first heat of passion he commanded them to have their heads cut off. They were taken outside the town, and the people followed them, admiring their courage. When they had arrived at the place of martyrdom, the eldest of them entreated the executioner to begin by the youngest, lest the tor-

ments of the others might discourage him. This young man, named Romanus, then knelt down, and the executioner had already taken up his bare sword to strike, when a messenger came on the part of Julian with orders to spare. The perfidious Emperor would not let them obtain the glory of martyrdom. The young soldier was deeply grieved, and said, "Romanus was not worthy to bear the name of a martyr." But the Emperor spared only their lives, for he banished them to the farthest end of the empire, forbidding them to abide in the cities.<sup>1</sup>

We have dwelt at some length on the state of Paganism in the first centuries of the Church, in order that the condition of Christians at that time may be better understood, and that it may the better be seen how great were their temptations, how easy the fall, and what a remedy God had prepared thereto.

8. In the middle of the third century, a persecution broke out, more savagely fierce than any that had preceded. It had been foreshown by God, as St. Cyprian tells us,<sup>2</sup> to a holy man of the Church of Carthage. This man saw in a vision a father of a family sitting between two young men. One was standing on his right side, and was resting his face on his own hand with an expression of deepest sorrow. The other was on the left. He had a net in his hand, and was in the act of gathering therein the people who stood round about. Then a voice was heard which said that the young man on the right

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, at the year 360. . . . . <sup>2</sup> *Ep.* xi.



was afflicted, because his commandments were not obeyed; whilst the other rejoiced, because he had power to do harm to men. This was, according to St. Cyprian, a sign of the great relaxation which had crept into the Church, and of the coming storm.

The edict of persecution was peremptory, and it was put in execution with unusual vehemence. The magistrates had nothing to do but to seek the Christians and to punish them. Threats were accompanied by the exhibition of every species of instruments of torture. There were swords, cruel beasts, wheels, red-hot gridirons, racks, nails, burning coals, metal plates fired to white heat. The persecutors tried their skill at finding new instruments of torture. These were not such, that the patient might briefly be put to death. The tyrant's intention was that they should suffer the longest, and encounter death by slow fire. St. Jerome, in his *Life of Paulinus*,<sup>1</sup> gives us some instances of the blind cruelty which was used on the Christians.

In a word, the horror of the persecution was such, that many believed in the fulfilment of that terrible prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that even the elect, if it were possible, should be induced into deception.<sup>2</sup>

9. We may imagine better than describe the state of excitement and anxiety in which this persecution found the Christians. They were anything but prepared to meet such a shock. They had enjoyed

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning. <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiv. 24.

many years' peace, and this prolonged rest had been prejudicial to their spiritual welfare. The accumulation of riches had caused a considerable diminution of fervour. Then, many had embraced the Christian faith for merely temporal purposes—to please a friend, to obtain a post, or even from sheer love of novelty. The priests themselves had become worldly, and greater care was taken to furnish the churches with precious lamps, silver censers, and golden chalices, than to ordain fitting ministers of the Gospel.

When the blast came, many a spiritual edifice fell, for it was built on sand. At Alexandria there was an almost universal apostasy. Those who held public offices were driven into it by the fear of losing their posts; others, impeached by their neighbours, were dragged with chains to the place of execution. Their trembling hands, their pallid faces, excited the raillery of Pagans, who jeered at them, because they saw that they were equally afraid to sacrifice to the gods and to die for the faith. Others came boldly to the altars denying that they had ever been Christians, and their example was followed by many. Only a few were constant enough to suffer themselves to be cast into prison; but even of these the greater number, after a few days, fell into apostasy.

The number of defections was even greater at Carthage. So many were those who sought to apostatise, that, as St. Cyprian, an eye-witness, tells us,<sup>1</sup> the magistrates had no time to attend to them all, and

<sup>1</sup> Lib. de Lapsis.

were obliged, at the request of the apostates, to protract their sittings in the public square, even after the night had set in. Those who had fallen perverted the others. Some brought with them their children in their own arms, that they might lose the grace of baptism. The rich were weaker, for the fear they had of losing their goods.<sup>1</sup>

10. Those who went back to idolatry of their own free will were simply called "Apostates;" the others were called "Lapsed," or fallen.

And there were many kinds of lapsed. Some had offered incense to idols (*thurificati*), or had defiled themselves either by eating of the flesh of the victims, or by personally making a sacrifice to false gods (*sacrificati*).

Others had not gone so far; yet, to escape death, they had made use of means unworthy of Christians. They had presented to the judge a "*libellus*," or memorial; hence their name, "*Libellatici*." In this memorial they declared that they were not Christians, that they were ready to offer incense, and to partake of the flesh of the victims, the moment they would be called upon to do so.

Others had employed some Pagan friend or servant to do that which their consciences would not allow them to do personally, as if what is done through the agency of others be not imputable to the chief agent. Others, again, by a previous bribe, had implored of the magistrates not to be called upon to

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, Hist. Eccl., an. 259.

put their weak faith to the test, and had received in return a schedule, attesting that they had actually complied with the orders of the Emperors.

Some, among the lapsed, had taken an active part in the superstitions of the Pagans. Such were those who wore the crown used by the sacrificers; those who filled the office of "Flamen" or pagan priest, whose duty it was to exhibit to the people the games and spectacles which were given in honour of the gods, and which invariably were sullied by superstitious rites; those who acted on the stage or drove the chariots in the public spectacles; those who sold victims or incense for the sacrifices, who co-operated in the making of false divinities, who erected altars or temples to their names.<sup>1</sup>

We must pity, rather than hastily censure the weakness of those of our forefathers who gave way in the combat. Martyrdom appears surrounded with a wonderful halo of glory when looked at from a distance, and no doubt it is one of the noblest privileges to which God may destine a Christian. But much of this prestige vanishes away in presence of the dreary reality—the prison, the rack, the death by slow fire.

It is the property of a rash and inconsiderate mind, to wish actually for the trials to which the martyrs were subjected, or to boast of fidelity in temptation. The Prophet Jeremias himself recognised his weakness, when he said, "The mercies of the Lord that

<sup>1</sup>See *Devoti, Instit. Canonica*, l. iv. tit. iii.

we are not consumed, because His commiserations have not failed.”<sup>1</sup> And St. Paul, with Isaias : “ Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been made as Sodom, and we had been like unto Gomorrha.”<sup>2</sup>

Who can tell the mental anguish, the remorse of conscience, the inward struggles which these weak Christians experienced under the threats by which they were terrified ? One of these memorials, found among the ten thousand papyri discovered at El-Fayoum, gives us sufficient indications to judge of the depression of mind of those fallen Christians.<sup>3</sup>

11. The discipline practised with regard to apostates in general was most rigorous. They were cast out of the Church. In some places they were not admitted to reconciliation and absolution, except in case of death. But, as a general rule, the condition for readmission was that the apostate should perform the established canonical penances. These were lengthened or shortened by the Bishop, in proportion to the sinner's guilt and the fervour of his repentance. We have already seen, at the end of the last chapter, what to think of this relaxation of the canonical penance with reference to Indulgences.

12. By little and little, with the sanction of the Church, a custom was introduced into the Christian community. There were never wanting in the Church

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ix. 29 ; cf. Isa. i. 9.

<sup>3</sup> See the “Pélerin,” 8th April 1894. “Faiblesse et Repentir,” par Alfred de Bezançenet.



generous souls who, while others were falling away from their sacred engagements, adhered steadfastly to Christ, even "unto tribulation, unto distress, unto famine, unto nakedness, unto danger, unto the sword."<sup>1</sup> They had already confessed their Master before the judge, they continued to confess Him in prisons, they were about to confess Him even unto death. They were dear to Him, therefore, rich in merits, even more than was necessary for them to atone for their own personal debts. Might they not intercede for their brethren, and interpose the surplus of their merits between them and God, and thus obtain for them a more speedy reconciliation with the Church? Charity has ever been ingenious: in this case it worked prodigies.

So, when the excommunicated lapsed repaired to the prisons, and falling on their knees before the martyrs, suppliantly entreated these friends of God to open for them, by their intercession, the gates of the kingdom of heaven, by making over to them a part of their sufferings, the martyrs, grand in their generosity, gladly became the mediators of their fallen brethren, and delivered to them a memorial, known under the name of "*Libellus martyrum*," to be presented to the Bishop and examined by him, that, if he deemed it expedient, the lapsed might again be received into the bosom of the Church.

Thus the martyrs became sureties for the penitents; nay, they actually offered their own merits

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 35.

towards the payment of their debts; and the Church would accept this substitution in consideration of the better and more illustrious portion of her flock; and, "*filling up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in the flesh of her children for His body, which is herself,*"<sup>1</sup> she would dispense with the penance, and welcome in a fond embrace the prodigals to her bosom.

Indeed, this custom of having recourse to the martyrs' intercession had long been in use in the Church, though it was never so widely spread as in the time of which we are speaking. Tertullian's words on the subject are remarkable: "Which peace," says he, "some not having in the Church, are accustomed to beg from the martyrs in prison; and therefore you should possess and cherish and preserve it in you, that so ye may perhaps be able to grant it to others."<sup>2</sup> It is true that, when a Montanist, he reproved this custom; but he became thereby a more authentic witness of the truth we are stating, and this, for us, is sufficient.

Doubtless, St. Irenæus also was alluding to this practice when he wrote: "The holy martyrs forbore showing any sign of haughtiness with regard to the apostates. On the contrary, *they willingly communicated to those who were in need a portion of the goods which they abundantly possessed.* They showed them a heart full of sympathy and tenderness, like that of a mother, and shed for them many tears

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ad Martyres, c. I.

before God their Father. They were asking for life, and God granted it to them, and *they shared it with their neighbour*, and in all things they came out victorious in the sight of God.”<sup>1</sup>

13. This writing or memorial which the martyr made over to the penitents was also called his “*desiderium*” or wish; his petition, his legacy. It was considered as his testament, and respected as such.<sup>2</sup>

Not that the Bishop would always grant at once the petition expressed therein; but an account was taken of the length of the penance to be performed, as also of the part the sinner had already gone through. All this being duly considered, the martyrs’ satisfactions were applied to the penitent, in virtue of, and together with, the infinite satisfactions of Jesus Christ; he was absolved from his penance and restored to the communion of the Church, in a word, the Indulgence was granted.

And this Indulgence the Bishops would grant not in their tribunal only, in the external “forum,” but in the tribunal of God, in the internal “forum,” remitting in truth and in very deed, that which they proclaimed by word of mouth. For, this concession was called the giving of peace to the fallen, “*pacem dare lapsis* ;” and, unless true peace had corresponded to their words, they would indeed have incurred the reprehension uttered by God through

<sup>1</sup> See Euseb., Hist. Eccl., l. v. c. ii.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Cyprian’s Epist. xviii.

the mouth of Jeremias : " And they healed the breach of the daughter of my people disgracefully, saying : Peace, peace, and there was no peace." <sup>1</sup>

That the punishment due in the sight of God was remitted, as well as the canonical punishment, was the sense of the Fathers of the Church at that time. Thus St. Cyprian hopes confidently that the lapsed, when about to die, though they have not yet fulfilled the whole of their penance, in virtue of the martyrs' intercession, " the hand having been laid upon them unto penance, will soon come to God with peace, which *the martyrs*," says he, "*in their letters to us, have desired should be given them.*" <sup>2</sup>

Now, when we compare this short description of the "memorials of the martyrs" with what we have explained in the first and second chapters of this book concerning the genuine idea of an Indulgence, what can we conclude but that such a transfer, when endorsed by the Bishop, was a true, real Indulgence? For, we have the remission of a temporal penance due for sins previously committed, which remission was solemnly granted and officially recognised by those, in the Church, to whom the Keys of the kingdom of heaven had been intrusted; and this remission was made in virtue and by the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and of His saints.

14. What particularly confirms this identification of the "*libellus martyrum*" with the granting of

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. xiii.

an Indulgence is the doctrine which the great St. Cyprian has left on this subject in his different writings.

We have seen how many defections had taken place at Carthage. St. Cyprian was the Bishop of that city, and, zealous as he was for the integrity and purity of Christian discipline, he had to follow a middle course between enervating relaxation and excessive rigour in the readmission of penitent apostates.

The heretic Novatian, who about that time made an abortive attempt to assume the supreme pontificate in the Church of Rome against the legitimate Pope St. Cornelius (d. 251), maintained that none of the lapsed should be received back into the Church. His plea was that there would be no more martyrs, if so wide a door were opened to receive the repentant apostates. St. Cyprian discovered the venom of such a doctrine and laid it bare. "Think not, dear brother," he said, "that the virtue of the brethren will be diminished, or that we shall witness no more martyrdoms, because we open the gate of penance to those who have fallen, or we have offered a hope of peace to the humble penitents.

"The strength of true believers remains unshaken, and with those who fear and love God with sincerity of heart, a vigorous and healthy wholesomeness will not fail. For although we allow a time of penance, and we give peace to adulterers, yet virginity is not on that account wanting in the Church, neither does



the glorious purpose of continency grow faint through the sins of others. The Church is ever blossoming, crowned as she is with so many virgins; chastity and purity lose not the tone of their glory; and though to the adulterer penance and pardon are given, yet the vigour of continency is not weakened.”<sup>1</sup>

But the greatest opposition St. Cyprian had to meet on this matter, came from those who would have the apostates admitted again into the Church, without a sufficient warrant for their worthiness and contrition, and even without their having gone through any penance whatever. Several confessors, among whom one Lucian of Carthage, presumed to give, both in their own name and in that of the martyrs, by whom they said they had been commissioned to do so, letters or memorials, in general terms, available for one or many persons indiscriminately.

Some went even so far as to traffic on these letters, whilst the inferior clergy arrogated to themselves, without any consent from the Bishop, the right of reconciling to the Church any who presented themselves provided with such letters. A man notorious for his crimes and rebellion to the Church, Felicissimus, whom Novatus, a simple priest, had appointed deacon on his own authority, taught publicly that any one should be received into the Church without a previous penance. This was a grievous abuse.

A price had been set on St. Cyprian's head, and

<sup>1</sup> Baronius, *Ann. Eccl.*, t. ii. a. 254, n. 105.

the circus and amphitheatre of Carthage were continually ringing with the shouts of "Cyprian to the lions." The holy man, thinking that his withdrawal might be a means of appeasing the sedition, sought a place of concealment, from which he continued to administer his flock. He wrote to Rome on the matter. The answer he received from the clergy who ruled the Church during the vacancy of the Holy See was to this effect: That the Church must not lose any of her vigour by the injudicious granting of Indulgence, neither should she relax the reins of severity to the detriment of the majesty of the faith. In presence of the defections which were daily becoming more numerous, to grant reconciliation to those who had fallen were of no avail, unless the apostates showed signs of sincere and heartfelt penance.<sup>1</sup>

St. Cyprian, having had this answer, wrote from his place of exile several letters to the martyrs and confessors, to the priests and deacons, as also to the faithful people, instructing them what the discipline of the Church should be with regard to apostates, their penance, and their reconciliation. What he particularly insisted upon was the abolition of those *blanks* given by the martyrs, and which could be made over to any one. "To this you should diligently attend," he writes to the martyrs, "that you designate by name those to whom you wish peace to be given."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Darras, "A General History of the Catholic Church." New York. Vol. i. pp. 242, and foll.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. xv. See also Epp. xii. xiii. xiv. xvi.

15. But what better illustrates our point, and the similarity between an Indulgence and the absolution then given on the martyrs' recommendation, is the book which St. Cyprian wrote, "*De Lapsis*," of *those that have fallen*. It was written in 251, to serve as a guide to the bishops whom he had convoked for the purpose of deliberating on the question, in order that they might proceed with unity of views and concord of action.

The persecution of Decius was so much the shorter as it had been more violent. This Emperor had been the scourge of God, and the means used by Him to purify the Church; but he must yield at God's bidding. When St. Cyprian wrote, peace had already been restored to the Church. In the exordium of his book, this holy father expresses his joy at this fact, and at the glorious phalanx of martyrs and confessors whom the persecution had produced. At the same time, he gives vent to his sorrow, for the disturbance which had been created in the Church by the arrogance of those that had fallen.

"Tears are necessary rather than words," says he, "to express the sorrow which makes us weep over the wound of our body, and groan over the loss of so many. Is there any one so hard and cruel who, forgetful of Christian charity, will remain with his eyes tearless at the sight of the loss of so many brethren? . . . I pity you! I pity you, brethren; neither does my wholesomeness and personal health suffice to soften my sorrow, for the shepherd receives

a greater wound when it is inflicted on his flock. . . . The arrows of the destroying enemy have stricken also my members, and the cruel ones have thrust their sword even through my bowels."

In this sorrowful tone, the holy Bishop goes on bewailing the lack of discipline and fervour which had been the cause why so many Christians had opposed little or no resistance, sacrificing their salvation on the altar of the devil, and lighting up their hope and faith on that of death.

But what made matters worse was that many, encouraged even by priests who had been untrue to their vocation, had the presumption of re-entering into the communion of the Church, without having previously performed a satisfactory penance. "Such as these," continues St. Cyprian, "on coming back from the devil's altar, draw near to the Lord's sanctuary, with their hands as yet sordidly dripping with the incense offered to the gods. They have not yet digested the flesh of the victims offered to the idols; their breath is as yet tainted with the putrid smell of those deadly viands, and already they pretend to throw themselves on the body of Christ. . . .

"Despising the admonitions of Scripture, before they have expiated their crimes, before even they have confessed them, before they have cleansed their conscience with sacrifice and the imposition of the Bishop's hand, before they have appeased the anger of the Lord, they do violence to His Body and Blood, and with their mouth and with their hand they sin

against the Lord, far more now than when they denied Him."

St. Cyprian goes on inculcating the practical truth that the absolution granted to them is untimely ; that as it has been granted against the will and disposition of God, it is fruitless and deceitful, nay more, baneful to their souls, and that the intercession of the martyrs has no virtue, where true repentance is wanting.

He then relates wonderful facts which had taken place, both of persons who, notwithstanding their unrepented apostasy, presumed to receive Holy Communion, and of others who, on the contrary, were eager to exonerate, through confession, their consciences from even simple thoughts of sacrificing to the idols.

But the main thought which engrosses the holy Bishop's attention, and is the very soul of his book, is the grand fact of the health-giving transfer of satisfactions, from one member unto another in the body of Christ, through the pastor's authority. "The Lord can mercifully pardon him who repents, labours, prays ; He can set down to his account whatever the martyrs have asked and the Bishops (*sacerdotes*) have done for such persons."

St. Cyprian concludes his book, by earnestly exhorting the lapsed to do penance, to confess their sins, and to foster a sincere and efficacious desire of contrition and expiation. Moreover, he promises to grant, in due time, to those who will have given sufficient



signs of penance, the absolution of their faults and the boon of reconciliation with the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Who, whilst reading the decree of the Council of Trent, issued in its 25th session on the matter of Indulgences, will fail to acknowledge that the same spirit, which had animated the great Bishop of Carthage in writing his book "*De Lapsis*," had also guided the fathers of Trent in the publication of their decree? Both recognise the lawfulness of a transfer of the satisfactory merits of Christ and of His saints, to the spiritually poorer and more destitute members of the Church. Both extol in commendatory words this bond of Christian unity and this token of brotherly charity. But at the same time they recommend, in the pastors, a judicious dispensation of those spiritual treasures of which they are but the ministers, and, in the faithful, true repentance and the state of grace, in order not to vilify by their unworthiness the gifts of God, and make themselves more guilty by not valuing, as they should, the merits of Christ and the satisfactions of His saints.

16. The dissensions which had been roused in the Church, on occasion of the penance which the pastors were to exact from the lapsed, as a condition for their readmission, did not cease with St. Cyprian's death. The great Bishop of Carthage sealed with his blood his unsullied faith in 258. Fifty years later, a lapsed Christian, and one indeed who could claim

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Moehler, *Patrologie*, S. Cyprien.

no plea for excuse, for he had denied the faith even before the persecution, uttered seditious cries against the inflexible firmness of the Roman Pontiff. For Pope St. Marcellus, of whom the "*Liber Pontificalis*" says that "he established twenty-five *titulos* or parish churches, as it were so many dioceses for the administration of Baptism and *Penance*, and for the burial of the martyrs,"<sup>1</sup> exacted from those that had fallen, as a condition for reconciliation, the tears of sincere repentance.

The factious clamours which that renegade uttered against these measures, created in Rome discord, contentions, and murders. Such were the troubles caused in the Christian community, that the Emperor Maxentius was prevailed upon to send the holy Pontiff into exile.

Pope St. Damasus recorded the fact in the following inscription which he placed over St. Marcellus's tomb:—

VERIDICVS RECTOR LAPROS QVIA CRIMINA FLERE  
 PRAEDIXIT MISERIS FVIT OMNIBVS HOSTIS AMARVS  
 HINC FVROR HINC ODIVM SEQVITVR DISCORDIA LITES  
 SEDITIO CAEDES SOLVNTVR FAEDERA PACIS  
 CRIMEN OB ALTERIVS CHRISTVM QVI IN PACE NEGAVIT  
 FINIBVS EXPVLSVS PATRIAE EST FERITATE TYRANNI  
 HAEC BREVITER DAMASVS VOLVIT COMPERTA REFERRE  
 MARCELLI VT POPVLVS MERITVM COGNOSCERE POSSIT

"The veracious Ruler, inasmuch as he ordered the lapsed to bewail their crimes, became to all these wretched a bitter enemy.

<sup>1</sup> "xxv. titulos in Roma constituit quasi diocesis (*sic*) propter baptismum et poenitentiam et sepulturas martyrum."—In Marcello. See the "*Liber Pontificalis*," par l'Abbé Duchesne, *passim*.

Hence rage follows; hence hatred, discord, strife, sedition, murders: the bonds of peace are broken. For another's crime, who denied Christ in time of peace, he was expelled from the bounds of his country by the tyrant's cruelty. These things ascertained, Damasus would briefly relate, that the people might know the merit of Marcellus."

St. Marcellus was succeeded in the Supreme Pontificate by St. Eusebius (310). This Pope had to meet with a similar opposition, on the part of the lapsed, as his predecessor. A certain Heraclius, perhaps the same renegade who had persecuted St. Marcellus, incited the Emperor against the new Pontiff, who also was exiled. Yet his accuser, too, met with the same fate. St. Eusebius was banished on the coast of Sicily, where he ended his mortal life.

We are likewise indebted to St. Damasus, for a record of this fact, in the inscription which he composed and placed over the tomb of the martyr-pontiff.

DAMASVS EPISCOPVS FECIT  
HERACLIVS VETVIT LAPSOS PECCATA DOLERE  
EVSEBIVS MISEROS DOCVIT SVA CRIMINA FLERE  
SCINDITVR IN PARTES POPVLVS GLISCENTE FVRORE  
SEDITIO CAEDES BELLVM DISCORDIA LITES  
EXTEMPLIO PARITER PVLSI FERITATE TYRANNI  
INTEGRA CVM RECTOR SERVARET FOEDERA PACIS  
PERTVLIT EXILIVM DOMINO SVB IVDICE LAETVS  
LITORE TRINACRIO MVNDVM VITAMQVE RELIQVIT  
EVSEBIO EPISCOPO ET MARTYRI

"Damasus, Bishop, wrote. Heraclius forbade the lapsed to bewail their sins. Eusebius taught these wretched to weep over their crimes. The people are divided into factions. Whilst the minds were thus incensed with fury, and sedition, murders, war,

discord, and strifes were witnessed, both were forthwith sent into exile by the cruelty of the tyrant. Yet the Pontiff preserved entire the bonds of peace. He suffered his exile with joy, taking the Lord for his judge, and left the world and this life on the shore of Sicily. To Eusebius, bishop and martyr."<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, was the motherly solicitude of the Church towards her fallen children. She wished them to return to her bosom; she longed for that moment. But they must repent, otherwise she would add to the guilt, by being partaker of their sins.

17. But her tender care was not confined to this mortal life. She followed her children with anxious eyes even beyond the grave. Of some she had the confident trust that their lot was among the blessed. They had served God with their whole heart; perhaps they had laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Her exiled children could direct to them their devout supplications.

## ATTICE

DORMI IN PACE

DE TVA INCOLVMITATE

SECVRVS ET PRO NOSTRIS

PECCATIS PETE SOLLICITVS

"Atticus, sleep in peace, sure of thine own safety; and pray earnestly for our sins."<sup>3</sup>

With others she had no more concern. They had disgraced their baptismal seal; they had turned

<sup>1</sup> See "Rome Souterraine," par Paul Allard, l. iii. chap. v. 2me éd. Paris, 1874. See also Carini Is. "I lapsi e la deportazione in Sicilia del Papa S. Eusebio." Roma, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. i. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Inscription of the beginning of the fourth century, found near the Church of St. Sabina in Rome. See "Moniteur de Rome," 21 Mai, 1893.

deserters of the great Captain, and expired suffocated by the incense they had burned to idols, or choked by the meats offered to the gods of the Capitol.

But there were some who had died bearing on their forehead the seal of redemption. These, she might with reason presume, were not sufficiently freed from the bonds of this world, to be admitted at once to behold a thrice holy God. For these she prayed *refreshment, light, and peace*; "*locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis ut indulgeas deprecamur.*"<sup>1</sup> She knew full well that, after death, no change can take place in the soul with regard to its essential state, but she was at the same time conscious of the existence of burning flames, in which the "last farthing is to be repaid."<sup>2</sup>

And so, while their bodies were taken to the grave, the train of her ministers accompanied them with the singing of psalms;<sup>3</sup> neither would she depart without engraving on the marble slab which closed the *loculum* the wishful prayer, "*Spiritus tuus bene requiescat in Deo,*"—"May thy spirit rest well in God!"

Sometimes it happened that these suffering spirits would, in a vision or a dream, solicit from their friends special helps to be freed from their torments. Then the faithful would redouble their prayers and supplications, hopefully trusting that they would be

<sup>1</sup> Sacram. Gelas. ap. Muratori, Lit. Rom. Vet., t. i. col. 749-760.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Const. Apost. vi. 17, ed. Pitra, Jur. Eccl. Græc., t. i. p. 344.



of some avail to assuage their pains.<sup>1</sup> St. Perpetua, whilst awaiting in the prison at Carthage the day of her martyrdom, saw in a vision her brother Dinocrates, a boy of seven years, who had died from a loathsome wound in the face, coming out from a dark place. He looked parched with thirst, and bore on his countenance the marks of great sorrow. There was a well close by, but its margin was higher than the boy. Whatever efforts he made to get at the water were fruitless, and Perpetua could not help him, for an abyss divided them.

The kind sister was heartily grieved. She understood that he was suffering, and though she had already prayed for him, she now ceased not to do so, night and day. At last she was given to see Dinocrates once more. But now he was comely, well-dressed, and refreshed, and a simple scar showed that the wound had been perfectly healed. The well was there, but the rim thereof had been lowered to the boy's waist. And the boy drew water incessantly with a golden goblet, and he drank thereof, and the goblet never failed. And when his thirst had been quenched, he went to play in the manner of children with great joy. And Perpetua understood that he had been freed from his pain.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Fidebam me profecturam labori ejus."—The Passion of St. Perpetua, n. vii., edited by J. Armitage Robinson, Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., n. vii. and viii. Mr. Robinson (p. 29) rejects the interpretation of St. Perpetua's vision given by Catholic writers after St. Augustine (*De Anima ad Renatum*, l. i. cap. x.), that the soul of Dinocrates was suffering in Purgatory for some slighter faults committed in life. The explanation which he gives is that the boy had died

Yet, the Church had better gifts to offer to the Divine Justice, in compensation for the transgressions of her children, than mere supplications. She had the unbloody sacrifice of the altar—both a commemoration and a renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross. It was offered on the day of the deposition, and repeated on stated anniversaries, as Tertullian tells us.<sup>1</sup> Some were deprived of this refreshment as a punishment for some unworthy actions severely condemned by the Church,<sup>2</sup> but the denial of its efficacy was styled a heresy.<sup>3</sup> St. Ambrose celebrated it for Valentinian, Theodosius, and his

unbaptized, and that the quenching of his thirst is to be taken to mean, on his part, the reception of baptism. Much could be said on this *universal indulgence*, but the following suggestions will suffice. The theory that baptism can be given after death is in direct contradiction—*first*, with the nature of a sacrament, which is a means of grace for the wayfarer (*viator*) only; *second*, with the teaching of the Church, borne out by the dictates of reason, with regard to the immutability of the soul after death; *third*, with Holy Scripture: "If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be" (Eccles. xi. 3). Moreover, there was not, that we know, any open controversy on the existence of Purgatory, or on the fact that baptism could not be conferred after death, before or at the time of St. Augustine, that Mr. Robinson should presume to say of the great doctor of Hippo, that he was driven to this explanation by *the exigencies of controversy*. But on what ground, shall we ask, does Mr. Robinson categorically assert that the household of St. Perpetua was a pagan one? What if some one were to uphold that, with the exception of the father, all its members were Christians, or at least catechumens? Lastly, we shall be allowed to observe that the confirmation which Mr. Robinson draws in favour of his view from the 9th Similitude of Hermas (xv. 5) is, to say the least, not cogent, for the passage need not be interpreted of baptism given after death. See Le Nourry, *Dissertatio de Vita et Scriptis S. Hermæ*, art. xix., and the places to which he refers. Migne, *Patr. Græc.*, t. i.

<sup>1</sup> *De Corona Militis*, c. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Cypr. Ep.* 66.      <sup>3</sup> *St. Epiph. Hæres.* 75.

brother Satyrus, whilst St. Augustine wrote a book, *De cura pro mortuis*, "on the care for the departed," in which he bore witness to the antiquity and Christianity of this custom. "Some," says St. Ambrose, "celebrate this sacrifice on the third and on the thirtieth day; others on the fourth and fortieth."<sup>1</sup>

But charity is ingenious. Whilst the priests were offering the Divine Sacrifice for the repose of the departed—*sacrificium pro dormitione*—the faithful thought they could do some work of charity, and thereby benefit their dear friends detained in the cleansing prison. Some of them were blessed with the abundance of the goods of this world, and there were not wanting within the bosom of the Church numbers of poor and infirm. These they would collect in a love-feast, ἀγάπη, and, in memory of the deceased, feed and refresh in the name of Christ. Perhaps the kind Judge, who promised that a cup of cold water given in His name would not be without a reward,<sup>2</sup> would cause the earthly rejoicing of the poor to be re-echoed below by a proportionate assuagement in the sufferings of the brethren. Thus, the illustrious Senator Pammachius celebrated the funeral of Paulina, the daughter of St. Paula.<sup>3</sup>

Or else, they would set free some of their slaves, thus proclaiming by deed that "freedom wherewith

<sup>1</sup> De Obitu Theodosii, n. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 42.

<sup>3</sup> St. Paulinus, Ep. xiii. 11.

Christ has made us free,"<sup>1</sup> and urging the great Judge to set their friends at liberty and admit them to the inheritance of the children of the kingdom. This they confidently practised as a redemption for their souls—*pro redemptione animæ suæ*; this they trusted God would accept in favour of their friends.<sup>2</sup>

These, then, were the principal ways in which the faithful were accustomed to succour their departed brethren. They could not think that the links which had bound them together could be utterly broken asunder. Is not love stronger than death? Theirs indeed was, for it was grounded on the substantial, divine, imperishable love of God. And so they trusted that God would graciously accept their prayers, their sacrifices, their moanings, their generosity, their abnegation, in favour of their friends. The Church knew this their pious trust; and she, the Mistress of truth, approved of it, encouraged it. She did more. She watched the movement of compassionating charity towards the holy souls, and the movement was growing as a torrent. Truly what is the voice of Nature is the voice of God. She had the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Hitherto she had made use of them in favour of the living only. Could she not thereby benefit the dead also? Were they not within the pale of the one great Church which Christ has founded?

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 31.

<sup>2</sup> See Armellini, "Gli antichi cimiteri cristiani," Roma, 1893, pp. 24, 25, where he gives several such inscriptions.

And so, in course of time, she exercised, in favour of the holy souls in Purgatory also, the power of granting Indulgences. She began to reach them with her *pardons*, as she had reached them with her prayers and sacrifices. And this was no innovation, no usurpation, but the mere display of a right which she had possessed from the beginning; for He who sits at the tiller of the world, and who regulates the return of each season, had decreed that, as time went on, the Church should, with greater liberality, open to her living children the treasury of the holy Indulgences, and enable them to benefit thereby, in a formal manner, both their own selves, and the souls of their departed brethren.



## CHAPTER VI

### EVOLUTION

*"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up whilst he knoweth not."—*

MARK iv. 26, 27.

#### FROM THE FIFTH TO THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

The Church in time of peace—The penitential discipline organised—Inculcated by the Councils—False "Penitentials" rejected—The penitential Canons of various Councils—The severity of these penances—Redemptions and Commutations, akin to Indulgences—Pilgrimages, especially to Rome—Their connection with Indulgences—The power of granting Indulgences centred in the Pope—Pardons granted by letter—The Christian Stations—Their origin—Indulgences attached to the visit of the Stations—Pious foundations viewed with reference to Indulgences.

I. AT the break of the fourth century, peace began to dawn upon the Church. Her ministers were allowed to go out of the Catacombs, where they had, at different times, been buried alive, and to celebrate the sacred mysteries of their religion in the light of day. Her subterranean "*cubicula*" were abandoned for more sumptuous temples, rivalling in gold and beauty that of Jupiter in Rome and that of Apollo in Corinth. Her confessors came out of the prisons, still bearing on their bodies the scars of the wounds they had received for Christ.

For, a generous and noble-minded prince had succeeded the barbarous tyrants who, for fully three

centuries, had treated Rome and the Roman people with the cruelty and savageness with which the victorious Carthaginians treated of old their conquered foes. In the year 313, Constantine the Great, together with his colleague Licinius, published at Milan a joint-edict in favour of the Christians, commanding that complete liberty should be given them, and that their goods should be restored unto them.

However, persecutions did not, even then, completely cease. They did not cease in the provinces, especially those more remote from the capital of the empire; for we find martyrs even during Constantine's reign; and only half a century later, an Emperor died in Rome, whose hands had been steeped in the blood of Christians, and who could boast that, had the Christian religion been a perishable institution, he, if any, would certainly have ruined it. However, he did not overcome the Church; and although he fought hard during the three years that he held the supreme power, yet he had to confess at his death that he had been conquered by the Man-God of Galilee.<sup>1</sup>

The Eastern Churches, until the eighth century, were harrowed by underhand vexations and intermittent persecutions. The successors of the great Constantine on the throne of Byzantium forgot that they were only *outward bishops*, whose duty it was to protect the Church and defend her with their sword. They stepped into the sanctuary, and pre-

<sup>1</sup> Julian the Apostate, Roman Emperor from 361 to 363.

sumed to dictate concerning the Son of God, the honour due to images, the Procession of the Holy Ghost. They thought, with but a few exceptions, that it was part of their divine mission, as emperors, to torture the Christians and massacre their pastors.

So, the Church was never without her martyrs, without her confessors; and the practice of having recourse to them in their prisons in order to obtain, through their means, a release from canonical penances, may be said to have continued as long as the persecutions lasted—at least, where there were legitimate pastors to grant it.

Meanwhile, the canonical penances were in full vigour, and they continued to be so, long after the persecutions had ceased. And, side by side with the application of these penances, was the exercise on the part of the Bishops of the power they possessed to shorten them, as they judged proper in the sight of God.

2. Indeed, and this should be particularly noticed, the canonical penances have never been formally abolished. They fell into disuse, especially at the time of the Crusades, as we shall show hereafter; but, even then, and later, the Church repeatedly inculcated that, if she had allowed the non-application of these penances, not on that account would she depart from the spirit which pervaded them and from the end of their institution. Thus the Council of Trent mentions them with honour;<sup>1</sup> and St. Charles

<sup>1</sup> Sess. xxiv. ; De Ref., c. 8.

Borromeo, whose pastoral ministry may be said to have realised with perfect precision the decrees of that Council, has inserted among his instructions for confessors a brief account of the ancient canons, as a guide for his priests in the imposition of sacramental penance.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the penitential discipline became subjected to a regular organisation. In Rome the institution of the *Penitentiaries*, of which we have already spoken,<sup>1</sup> gave origin to a regular office with its corresponding duties. Socrates relates that, as early as the times of the Emperor Decius (d. 251), there was to be in every church, in Rome, a priest whose duty it was to hear the accusations of those who had fallen after baptism.<sup>2</sup> He was called *πρεσβύτερος ἐπὶ τῆς μετανοίας*, which we may well translate by "Penitentiary," and was intrusted with the execution of the exercises of penance contained in the "Penitentials."

These were kinds of manuals drawn up for the penitents. They varied according to the countries.

Of the different Penitentials which the destructive hand of time has spared, that of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, is worthy of special notice, as bearing witness to the ancient religious customs of this country.

Theodore had formerly been a monk of Tarsus in

<sup>1</sup> Chapter iv. p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> H. E., l. v. c. 19. See also Sozomenus, l. vii. c. 16, and Nicephorus Callistus, l. xii. c. 28.

Cilicia. He was learned and wise, and Pope Vitalian had chosen him in 668 to fill the See of Canterbury. He was the first who ever exercised a primatial jurisdiction over the other Churches of England. He founded several schools for the teaching of ecclesiastical sciences ; and until his death, which took place in 690, he earnestly laboured to maintain in all their purity the deposit of faith and the tradition of discipline.

To this end he composed his *Penitential*, or summary of canons for the regulation of penances to be imposed on diverse sins. Though what remains of it now is neither entire nor all genuine,<sup>1</sup> yet the work, on the whole, affords sufficient ground to impress the reader with the severity of ecclesiastical penances in those times.

Rome, of all other Churches, had its Penitential of ancient date ; and of Pope St. Simplicius (468-483), Anastasius the librarian relates that he appointed some priests to look over the penitents, and to receive their ἐξομολόγησιν or confession at St. Peter's, St. Paul's, and St. Lawrence's.<sup>2</sup> From Rome the custom soon spread to other Churches.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes the Bishop himself in person would

<sup>1</sup> What remains of this Penitential, and of the other works of Theodore, was printed at Paris by Jacques Petit in 1677 ; also in the 9th vol. of the Spicilegium of Dom Luc d'Achéry, and in the Appendix to the 6th vol. of the Councils of P. Labbe in 1671. See Migne, Nouvelle Encyclopédie Théologique, t. xxiii., at the word "Théodore," Paris, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Du Cange, at the word "Pœnitentia."

<sup>3</sup> See Capitularium Regum Francorum, l. vii. n. 132, in Canciani, vol. iii. p. 317.



preside over the penitents, and grant them, on stated days, the Pardon or Indulgence. At Cologne, the day especially chosen for the granting of such Pardons was Palm-Sunday.<sup>1</sup> Each Church was distinguished by some special practice. Ash-Wednesday was, as we have seen, generally chosen for the imposition of penance. In some places it was customary to gird the penitents, especially if they had been guilty of murder, with an iron chain, called *ferrum pœnitentiale*. They were commanded to go in this painful attire on a pilgrimage to the holy places.<sup>2</sup> In other churches, as, for instance, in the cathedral church of Sens, penitents were given a small woollen ball, which they were to bring back on Maundy Thursday, the reconciliation-day.<sup>3</sup>

3. As charity waxed cold, and there was a growing tendency on the part of Christians to shun these penances, the Church was obliged, in her Councils, to inculcate, under a severe sanction, the observance of the same.

The decrees of the Council held at Châlons-sur-Saône in 813, at which the Bishops of the "Gallia Lugdunensis," excepting those of the province of Tours, assisted, are a striking proof of the solicitude which the Church had, lest this saving institution should fall into disuse.

"The custom of traditional penance," says the

<sup>1</sup> Du Cange, at the word "Indulgentia."

<sup>2</sup> Martène Anecd. See the Lexicon Manuale ad Script. med. et inf. latin. par Maigne d'Arnis. Migne, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Du Cange, at the word "Pœnitentia."

Council, "has been abolished in many places ; therefore it is necessary to call upon the Emperor's help in order that public sinners be submitted to a public penance, and that they be excommunicated and reconciled according to the canons (c. 25).

"Some do not entirely confess their sins ; so they must be admonished to confess sins of thought, no less than exterior sins (c. 32). Confession must be made, not to God only, but also to priests ; and in this judgment, care must be taken lest any one should allow himself to be prejudiced by any passion (cc. 33 and 34).

"Many, in performing their penance, crave not so much for the remission of their sins, as for the fulfilment of their term ; and if they are forbidden the use of wine and meat, they seek after other dishes and more excellent drinks. A true penitent deprives himself entirely of the pleasures of the body. Some also deliberately sin with the hope of blotting out their crimes with almsgivings. One must not sin in order to give alms, but rather give alms because he has sinned (c. 35).

"Penance should be imposed according to Scripture and the custom of the Church, and those books which are called *Penitentials* should be utterly banished, as the errors contained therein are certain, though the authors thereof are uncertain. For such books serve only to deceive the sinner by imposing for great sins light and trifling penances"<sup>1</sup> (c. 38).

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. xlvii, n. 5.

4. Such, then, was the wish of the Church, viz., that the faithful should submit to the imposition of such penances, as had been sanctioned by a venerable tradition.

The Penitentials here condemned were little books containing a milder and shorter form of penance, than it had hitherto been the usage of the Church to inflict.

In fact, these new *Penitentials* fell short of the end which the Church had had in view, when establishing her true penal code. This end was that penance should be proportioned to the guilt, and that the body of the Church might thereby be purified from the plague of sin and the corruption of vice.<sup>1</sup> But these new Penitentials, by promising an untimely forgiveness, in reality only served to deceive the faithful.

Hence, generally speaking, the Bishops and the Councils strongly opposed such innovations. Thus, the sixth Council of Paris (829) rejects them, and inculcates, as the Council of Châlons had already done, the necessity of following the true penitential canons.<sup>2</sup> Halitgar, Bishop of Arras and Cambrai, who had assisted at this Council, wrote a treatise on Penance, in which he specified what penances should henceforth be used. These, however, are milder than they were in the ancient canons.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Οἱ γὰρ ἅγιοι πατέρες ἡμῶν μεταβολὰς τρόπους ἐκδέμενοι, καὶ ἐπιτιμῶν ἰδέας ἀναλόγους τοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἁμαρτήμασιν ἔσπευδον δι' αὐτῶν ἀνακαθαίρειν τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας."—Joan. Antioch. ed. a Cotelario, c. i. See Du Cange at the word "Pœnitentia."

<sup>2</sup> C. 43. Fleury, H. E., l. xlvii. n. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., l. xlvii. n. 28.

5. In the Council of Tribur, near Mainz (894), the penitential canons of the first century were renewed, and they remind us of those of Ancyra, and of the letters of St. Basil to Amphilochius. In fact, a wilful murderer is subjected to seven years' penance. For forty days, he is to be excluded from the church. In the meanwhile he has to fast on bread and water, to walk barefooted, wearing only such garments as natural decency commands; he is forbidden to carry arms or use a carriage; he must separate from his wife, and have no intercourse with other Christians.

When these forty days are over, he must still be excluded from the church, abstain from flesh meat, cheese, wine, and any kind of mead, a beverage made of water and honey. If he fall sick, or have to start on a journey, he is permitted to redeem Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday by giving a penny in alms or feeding three poor men. At the end of the year he is allowed to enter the church; but he must continue for two years more in the same penance, with permission, however, to redeem the three said days of the week in the above manner.

Each of the last four years he must fast during three quarantines or Lent; one before Easter, one before the Feast of St. John the Baptist, and one before Christmas. During these four years, he is bound to fast only on Wednesday and Friday, and is allowed to redeem the Wednesday. And at the end of these seven years, he will be

reconciled to the Church and will receive Holy Communion.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the tenth century, Atto, Bishop of Vercelli, in the 90th chapter of his Capitulary, which contains a hundred articles, recommended the parish priests to take cognizance of the signs of conversion and repentance manifested by the penitents; and if they accomplished their penance with extraordinary signs of fervour, or were in danger of death, he directed them to have recourse to the Bishop, or, in his absence, to the cardinals—so were the priests of the cathedral called—and obtain absolution.<sup>2</sup>

In the letters of Alexander II. (1061–1073), we often find the canonical penances alluded to, and permission given to the Bishops to remit part of them.<sup>3</sup>

About this time, St. Peter Damian, Bishop of Ostia, whom we know to have laboured so efficaciously towards the reformation of the clergy, complained bitterly that false canons had been substituted for the true ones, and that thereby the nerve of discipline had greatly been weakened;<sup>4</sup> whilst, on his part, St. Gregory VII. (1073–1085) inveighed against false penances,<sup>5</sup> and the Council of Piacenza re-echoed his complaints.

6. The canonical penances were most severe. They consisted chiefly in humiliations, fastings,

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. liv. n. 24.

<sup>3</sup> See Ep. 37; Ibid., l. lxi. n. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., l. lxiii. n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., l. lv. n. 55.†

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., l. lix. n. 76.



discipline, and other austerities. Sometimes the Bishops added to the penances prescribed in the Sacred Canons. Thus, we read that a certain Leontardus, for a sin of homicide, had been forbidden by his Bishop to communicate, except at the moment of death; that he likewise had been forbidden the use of meat and wine, except on Sundays and feast-days; that a prohibition had been laid upon him to have his hair cut, to marry, to converse with other men, to command his servants, to enjoy his goods, and to take a fief from his lord.

The Pope, John VIII. (872-882), heard of this, and fearing lest the penitent should be overcome with over-much sorrow, wrote to the Bishop, telling him that the penance seemed too severe to him, and that he should moderate it, lest the penitent should be cast into despair.<sup>1</sup>

We also read of King Edgar of England (957-975), that, for a grievous crime which he had committed, he was sentenced by St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, to a penance of seven years, during which he was not to wear his crown, but he was to fast two days in the week, and was to give much in alms. And of Blessed Ælfege we read in Matthew of Westminster (A.D. 974), that on Ash-Wednesday, after he had removed the penitents from the threshold of the church, he exhorted them to give themselves to fastings during the holy season of Lent, and to abstain not only from unlawful pleasures, but also

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 61; Fleury, H. E., l. liii. n. 37.

from such enjoyments as might have been permitted them by their state and condition.

To this epoch is to be referred the custom which prevailed in some parts of the Church, and of which we read in the Life of St. Bartholdus.<sup>1</sup> This holy man spent the greater part of his time in hearing confessions. Now, he was in the habit of striking all his penitents, without distinction of persons; neither would he dismiss any one without having administered to him a salutary discipline. And, when on his death-bed, he called to himself the whole congregation, heard their confession one by one, and after he had stricken each of them with his own hands, he absolved them.

Sometimes, too, the Church imposed penances upon sinners who had not asked for them, and she even threatened excommunication if they would not submit. Thus Stephen, Count of Auvergne (A.D. 867), having driven away by force Sigonius, Bishop of Clermont, from his See, and put a usurper in his stead, was commanded by the Pope St. Nicholas I. to restore immediately the prelate in his bishopric, and to present himself before the Legates whom he had sent to preside over a Council, in order that he might justify himself from this and other similar crimes he had committed. "Otherwise," added the Pope, "we forbid you the use of wine and of flesh meat, until you come to Rome, and present yourself before us."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Act. SS., t. vi, Jul. p. 480, col. 1, and p. 486, col. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. li. n. 8.

Yet, in the ninth century, secrecy in matters of faith and discipline was still a law in vigour in the Church, so that we possess but scanty documents with regard to the discipline of penance. A mention of this law of secrecy is made by St. Nicholas I. (866) in his answer to the consultation of the Bulgarians. These people had been previously converted to the Catholic faith, together with their King Bogoris; and they asked the Pope to teach them what to believe and to practise. We see, from the Pope's answer, that the penitential Canons, as well as the formulas of sacraments, were as yet a secret, known only by the priests.<sup>1</sup>

7. But the faithful were not always able to submit to these penances. Their bodily weakness and the exigencies of their state, often made them incapable of going through that long stage of privations and mortifications. Consequently, the Church allowed *redemptions or commutations*, that is to say, lighter exercises which did not tell so much on human nature, and thus dispensed, in the name of Christ, with the more severe ones, filling up what was wanting from the treasury of Christ and of His saints.

Of these redemptions and commutations we have many instances.

The Council of Ancyra had already expressly sanctioned a commutation of the public penance in the case of deacons who had once fallen, but who

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. l. n. 51.

afterwards stood firm.<sup>1</sup> In the epoch we are studying, these commutations and redemptions worked themselves into a regular system. Thus, the above-mentioned King Edgar, among the sixty-seven canons which he composed for the pastors of the churches, marks how a sick penitent might redeem the fast prescribed to him. One day's fast could be redeemed by an alms of one penny, or by the recitation of one hundred and twenty psalms, or again, by sixty genuflections and sixty Our Father's; two days' fast by a mass, &c.

In the Penitential of Theodore, of which we have already spoken, it is stated that a penitent who had been condemned to a year's fast on bread and water, could redeem a day by having a mass sung for himself, hearing it, offering the bread and wine with his own hands to the priest, and answering the latter's salutations and exhortations, and on that day he was allowed to eat and drink what he wished, except wine, meat, and suet; he could redeem other days in a like manner. Another way was also open for the same purpose, that of giving a fixed alms, according to the penitent's condition, either towards the deliverance of captives, the maintenance of the divine service, or the support of the poor who were at the charge of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

Those who were destitute of the goods of this world,

<sup>1</sup> See Wiseman, "Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church," Lect. xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Canones Pœnitentiales cum notis Antonii Augustini, Venetiis, 1584, tit. ix, chaps. 28, 29, 30.*

were by St. Bede's Penitential directed to redeem one day's fast, by singing three times the Psalm "Beati immaculati in via," and six times the Psalm "Misere mei Deus," and prostrating themselves on the ground seventy times, singing each time the Lord's Prayer.<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Penitential was about as severe. It ordered for a similar redemption the singing of fifty Psalms on bended knees in the church and the feeding of a poor man, or one hundred genuflexions in the church with appropriate penitential prayers. For the illiterate, it ordered the giving of three pence (*denarii*) in the case of a rich man, and of one penny in that of a poor man—the use of wine, meat, and suet being always forbidden.<sup>2</sup>

In Germany, Burchard, Bishop of Worms, who died in 1026, in the collection of canons which he composed for the restoration of ecclesiastical penance, speaks of these *redemptions*, or *commutations* of penances, especially in almsgivings and prayers.

In Italy, in the year 1062, there died at Luceole, in Umbria, St. Dominic, a hermit, surnamed *Loricatus*, on account of his ever wearing an iron breast-plate for penance. St. Peter Damian, who had been his penitent, tells us that this hermit, having learned that those who said eighty times twelve Psalms, with their arms stretched in the form of a cross,

<sup>1</sup> Canones Pœnitentiales, tit. ix. c. 31. Cf. Canciani, vol. ii. p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., c. 25 and foll.



redeemed a year's penance, practised it frequently, not for himself only, but for others also.<sup>1</sup> Similar facts are not unfrequently met with in the history of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

Now these *redemptions*, *compensations*, or *commutations* took place under the sanction, sometimes tacit, oftener explicit, of the Church. On the other hand, it would be impious, no less than absurd, to say that the Church would deceive her children by bringing them to believe that their punishment was atoned for, and that they were on equal terms with the justice of God, if it were not so in reality. We must then conclude that these compensations were nothing short of true Indulgences, and that by saying those prayers in the above-mentioned form, by performing those deeds of almsgiving, the sinner was released from his sin, as to the pain that remained to him to pay to the justice of God after his sin had been remitted, and this in virtue of the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and of His saints.

8. Another fact connected with these *redemptions* will no less illustrate our point; I mean the practice of *pilgrimages*.

Pilgrimages to the holy places, especially to Jerusalem, and to Rome, are of most ancient origin. It would be difficult to state when the faithful began to visit the sepulchre of our Blessed Lord and Saviour

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, Hist. Ecc., l. lx. n. 51.

<sup>2</sup> On these redemptions and commutations of penances, see Du Cange, Gloss. med. et inf. Lat., at the word "Pœnitentia."

at Jerusalem, His birthplace at Bethlehem, or the sacred shrines of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome.

When, in the year 351, under the Patriarchate of St. Cyrillus, the miraculous fact took place, recorded by Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, of the apparition in the sky, over the town of Jerusalem, of a luminous cross, stretching out from Mount Calvary to the Mount of Olives, fifteen stadia (or about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles) long and proportionately broad, there were then many pilgrims in the holy city, so that the fact was soon divulged far and wide.

In the eighth century St. Bede, in his work on the Holy Places, often speaks of frequent pilgrimages from England to Rome; and the Saxon Chronicle observes, as a remarkable event, that in one year, viz., 889, no pilgrims went to Rome, and Alfred's letters were to be sent by two messengers.<sup>1</sup>

Of St. Willibald's journey to the Holy Places, which he undertook in 721 with several of his countrymen, we have a detailed and interesting relation composed by a nun of Heidenheim under the Saint's dictation.<sup>2</sup>

Each country had also its venerated shrine. The above-named Council of Châlons speaks of two most famous pilgrimages of Rome and Tours. England had St. Alban's. It was the most renowned pilgrimage in Great Britain, and history tells us that when St.

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Sax., p. 90. Lingard's "Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church," c. ix. n. 5, note 68. Ed. Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Germain, Bishop of Auxerre, and St. Lupus, Bishop of Troyes, in their mission to this country (430), had victoriously fought against the Pelagians, they went to give thanks to God and to the glorious martyr St. Alban. St. Germain had the sepulchre opened, and placed therein the relics of all the Apostles, and of several martyrs, which he had collected from different countries. He then gathered on the very spot some dust, still dyed with the martyr's blood, took it with himself, and when he arrived at his town of Auxerre, he had a splendid church built in St. Alban's honour.<sup>1</sup>

9. In the beginning these pilgrimages had only one object, that of testifying the devotion of the faithful towards the mysteries of our Blessed Lord's life, and of claiming His patronage and that of His saints.

But, when the discipline of the Church became milder, another object was attached to pilgrimages. They sometimes served as a substitution, ratified by the Church, for the more severe penances. Morinus tells us that, as early as the eighth century, pilgrimages were introduced to take the place of canonical satisfactions.<sup>2</sup>

But, what most of all induced the faithful to undertake these long journeys, was the hope of hearing from the Prelates' lips words of pardon and absolution. In fact, to speak of Rome only, we

<sup>1</sup> See Fleury, H. E., l. xxv. n. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. vii. c. 15.

have many instances of men and women repairing in pilgrimage to the Eternal City in order to be released from their sins.

Thus (A.D. 867) a certain Eriartus, having killed a monk-priest of St. Riquier, went to Rome to be absolved of his crime. The Pope, St. Nicholas I., imposed upon him twelve years' penance. During the three first years he was to stand weeping at the church gate; during the fourth and the fifth he was to be among the hearers, without receiving Holy Communion; during the seven last years, he was allowed to receive Holy Communion at the most solemn feasts, but without making any offering. During all that time, he was to fast until evening, as in Lent, except on Sundays and feast-days, and was to travel only on foot. "He should," adds the Pope, "have done penance during all his lifetime, but we have taken into consideration his faith, and the protection of the Holy Apostles, which he came to seek."<sup>1</sup>

Here we see that the Supreme Pontiff, out of the plenitude of his apostolic authority, in consideration of the pilgrim's faith, as a moving cause, and in virtue of the holy Apostles' protection, as an efficient principle of satisfaction, releases a sinner from a part of that penance which, according to the Sacred Canons, he should have otherwise accomplished. And what is this but an Indulgence?

About this time Solomon, Bishop of Constance,

<sup>1</sup> See Fleury, H. E., l. li. n. 8.

ceding to human passion and frailty, had so far forgotten his episcopal dignity, as to seek and procure the death of three personages who had set themselves as his adversaries. However, he soon repented of his foul deed, and repaired to Rome to implore, from the Vicar of Christ, penance and forgiveness. The Pope, relates Ekkehard, received him with kindness. However, as it was then the custom, he let him wait outside his palace for some time, and at last the Bishop entreated him with sighs and tears to grant him the Indulgence. The Pope condescended to do so, and shortly after Solomon returned to his own city.<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, was the pilgrims' object. It is thus recorded in an inscription dating from the time of these pilgrimages. This inscription is to be found at St. Sebastian's, on the Appian Way, over one of the doors leading to the underlying hypogea—

HOC EST COEMETERIVM B. CALLIXTI PAPAE ET MARTYRIS INCLITI  
 QVICVMQVE ILLVD CONTRITVS ET CONFESSVS INGRESSVS FVERIT  
 PLENAM REMISSIONEM OMNIVM PECCATORVM SVORVM OBTINEBIT  
 PER MERITA GLORIOSA CENTVM SEPTVAGINTA QVATVOR MILLIVM  
 SANCTORVM MARTYRVVM VNA OVM QVADRAGINTA SEX SVMMIS  
 PONTIFICIBVS QVORVM IBI CORPORA IN PACE SEPVLTA SVNT  
 QVI OMNES EX MAGNA TRIBVLATIONE VENERVNT ET VT HEREDES  
 FIERENT IN DOMO DOMINI MORTIS SVPPLICIVM PRO CHRISTI  
 NOMINE PERTVLERVNT

"This is the cemetery of St. Callistus, Pope and Martyr of great renown. Whoso will enter, being contrite and shriven, will obtain the full remission of all his sins through the glorious merits of one hundred and seventy-four thousand holy martyrs,

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<sup>1</sup> Ekkehard, P. I., p. 25.



together with forty-six sovereign Pontiffs, whose bodies therein lie buried in peace, who have all come out of great tribulation, and who, for the name of Christ, have endured the torment of death, that they might be made heirs in the house of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

Of the happy palmer, then, we can say that

“Not in vain

He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell.”<sup>2</sup>

10. It has already been shown how the power of granting Indulgences emanates directly from the power of the Keys. As the plenitude of this power resides originally and ordinarily in the Roman Pontiff, so also the plenitude of the power of granting Indulgences. Those alone, therefore, who have received power from him can validly grant Indulgences, as no one can sit as judge of sins and remit them who does not from him derive his credentials.

But the Popes had, at least tacitly, allowed the full use of this power in the Bishops, in the first ages of the Church. Later, as the Church extended far and wide, and it was necessary that the principle of unity on which she is founded, and which is to bind together so many multitudes, should be asserted lest there should be schisms in the Church, the fulness of

<sup>1</sup> This is but a modern copy of the old inscription which time has destroyed, and it eloquently suggests, on the part of the pilgrims, as one of the motives for thus visiting those remains of the martyrs, the hope of gaining the holy Indulgences. It should, however, be observed, that this cemetery, properly called *ad Catacumbas*, was, until the recent discoveries made by De Rossi, confounded with that of St. Callistus, and that the number of 174,000 given to the martyrs, and that of 46 given to the Popes deposited therein, is due rather to the fictions of pious imaginations than to the data of history. See Armellini, *Gli antichi Cimiteri Cristiani di Roma e d'Italia*. Roma, 1893, p. iii. c. xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, 4th canto.

the exercise of this power began gradually to be withdrawn from the Bishops, and to be centred in the person of the sovereign Pontiff. This was done, not by any positive action, but by that interior motion of the Holy Ghost, which, in the order of grace, corresponds to the spontaneous development and natural adjustment of things in the order of nature.

By little and little, then, the faithful flocked to Rome, rather than to Tours, to Compostella, to St. Alban's, or to Jerusalem; and their object was to see Peter—Peter living in his successor—and to ask him pardon for past sins, and a release from those penalties which they had incurred, and which Divine justice demanded they should undergo—not in the face of the Church only, but in the face of Heaven; for what Peter looses on earth, is loosed also in Heaven.

Thus it is that pilgrimages to Rome became so frequent. The just thought they could not obtain the sanction of their holiness unless they saw Peter, and venerated the spots hallowed by the blood of the martyrs. The sinners had a hope of finding Pardon where the spiritual coffers of the Church lay ever opened. They came from England, from France, from Germany, and even from more distant countries.

These pilgrims could not fail to take back with them some keepsake from the Eternal City. Those among them whose interest had been more particularly awakened by the spots they had visited, and who were not altogether unskilled in penmanship,

drew out for themselves, as exactly as their ability allowed them, a topography which they brought home with them.

Thus did William of Malmesbury, a writer of the twelfth century, who inserted a topography of Rome and its cemeteries in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, whilst relating the journey thither of pilgrims and crusaders under Urban II. Little did he think; when writing out his itinerary, that illustrious archæologists would, in future ages, appeal to his authority, to reconstruct the topography of those famous catacombs, which were once the cradle of the Christian religion, and which are now its brightest jewels; and that his itinerary, as a magic ring, would serve to link together the faith of bygone centuries, with that which is now the very life of the Church of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

Filled with the memory of what they had witnessed, these blessed palmers gave expression to their enthusiasm by consigning to writing the records of the marvels of the Eternal City: "Mirabilia Urbis Romæ." And, either to keep fresh in their minds the memory of the heavenly treasures they had gained, or to entice others bravely to undertake the perilous journey, they drew up, under the name of *Libri Indulgentiarum*, catalogues of the Indulgences which could be gained by the visit to the

<sup>1</sup> See Armellini, *Gli Antichi Cimiteri*, &c., p. 96, and foll., where the learned archæologist speaks at some length of the other itineraries which have come down to us from the pilgrimages of the Middle Ages.

different shrines, and of the relics which were preserved therein.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, this concourse met with opposition. Some "trembled for fear where there was no fear."<sup>2</sup> They were afraid lest the condescension of the Roman Pontiff who, like his Master, Christ, "would have mercy, and not sacrifice,"<sup>3</sup> should turn to the detriment of the Church. They objected to these pilgrimages. The Council of Selingsstad (1022) forbade the penitents to go to Rome without leave from the Bishop or his vicar, lest the Pope should remit them all their sins.<sup>4</sup>

But the Pope, in remitting the penitents' debt, was only using a power which he had received from Christ, and no one could reasonably contest it. This the fathers of the Council of Limoges (1031) unanimously acknowledged: "We have learned from the Popes, and from the other Fathers, that if a Bishop has placed his diocesan under penance, and sends him to the Pope, that he may judge whether the penance is proportioned to the guilt, the Pope may, of his authority, confirm, lessen, or augment the same."<sup>5</sup>

11. And when the penitents could not go to Rome,

<sup>1</sup> Manuscripts of these *Libri Indulgentiarum* are to be found in the principal libraries of Europe, dating from the fifteenth, or even the end of the fourteenth century. They were first printed in the second half of the fifteenth century. See Paul Allard, *Rome Souterraine*, 2nd edit., Paris, 1874, p. 111, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. ix. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Can. 18. Fleury, H. E., l. lviii. n. 51. Cf. l. xlvi. n. 55.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., lix. n. 24.

or otherwise obtain a commutation of their penances, they applied by letter to the Supreme Pontiff, in order to obtain a Pardon for the punishment due to their sins.

Thus Pope John VIII. (+882), mentioned above, consulted by the Bishops of Germany whether those who had been killed in war, whilst combating against the pagans in favour of the Christian religion, and of the State, received the remission of their sins, answered, that those who had died with Christian piety received life eternal, and that he gave them absolution, as much as he had power to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Unless I am greatly mistaken, we have here an instance of a Pardon, which we now call a Plenary Indulgence. It is an Indulgence. For that absolution the Pope speaks of, cannot be the absolution which is called sacramental, since sacramental absolution supposes confession previously made, and the physical presence of the penitent; it is then an absolution granted outside the Sacrament—an Indulgence. It is plenary, for the Pope grants it to the whole extent of his power. These courageous men, therefore, who on the battlefield gave their lives for *faith* and *fatherland*, received, at the hour of their death, a full remission of the debt of temporal punishment due to their sins, and could go straight to heaven, to enjoy the bliss of the beatific vision.

Sometimes similar letters were sent to the Bishops

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. liii. n. 37. Cf. Baronius, Ann., tom. x. a. 878 n. 34.



also. Towards the year 876, Hildebald, Bishop of Soissons, having fallen dangerously ill, sent a written confession to Hincmar, Bishop of Rheims, his metropolitan. The latter, on receiving this message, ordered prayers to be offered for Hildebald throughout his arch-diocese ; but the same Bishop of Soissons sent a second time, by a priest, his confession to Hincmar, earnestly asking for letters of absolution.

Hincmar wrote back a letter, in which he spoke of the excellency of the power of remitting sin which has been entrusted to priests, and of the consequences of such a power. He then gave him a general absolution, in the form of a prayer, and excused himself for not having been able, through sickness, to go and see him. However, he says, he visits him in spirit, and commits to his brother priests to do to him what he himself would have done. He sends him, at the same time, the oil, which he himself has blessed with his hand.

“I caution thee,” he adds, “that, as I doubt not thou hast already done, besides this general confession, thou also confess in detail to God, and to a priest, anything thou knowest to have committed from the beginning of thy life to the present day. And it is enough for one to have made once this confession of all his sins in detail, provided he do not fall again ; if one fall again he must have recourse to penance, and remember that it avails him nothing to be sorry for his sins unless he abandon them.

“As for other lighter and daily sins, they should

be confessed daily to our brethren, in order that they may be blotted out by their prayers and by the practice of good works.”<sup>1</sup>

Morinius observes<sup>2</sup> that this absolution which Hincmar sent in writing was nothing but an Indulgence and blessing, and not a sacramental absolution, since it supposes that private confession is made to a priest in detail; and what he here calls general confession is that in which no sin is specified, as the *Confiteor* and other similar prayers.<sup>3</sup>

12. As the pilgrims often came to Rome in order to perform the devotion of the *Stations*, and gain the Indulgences annexed thereto by the Sovereign Pontiffs, we shall speak here of this ancient devotion.

The word station, “*statio*,” seems to have been borrowed, as we have said, from military usages. Among the Romans it was used to mean sometimes the place where guards were kept in safety for a time, sometimes the post which had been assigned them, and from which they were on no account to depart:—

“ . . . Servantque vices statione relictæ.”<sup>4</sup>

As to the idea of such an institution, it is to be traced down to the Synagogue, the rites and ceremonies of which were but figures foreshadowing the higher and holier sacraments of the new covenant. Among the Jews, then, there was this persuasion,

<sup>1</sup> Hincm., opus 40, t. 2, p. 686.

<sup>3</sup> See Fleury, l. lii. n. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Pœnit., l. viii. c. 25, n. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Virgil, *Æn.* l. ix.

that the people should assist at the sacrifice which was offered for them. But as this could not always be, they instituted a *מעמד*, station, office or ministry, composed of ten *בטלנין*, disengaged persons, whose duty was simply to represent the people in the sacrifices.

The word *Station* was therefore introduced in the Christian liturgy to signify the assistance of the faithful at the sacred functions, and was then synonymous with the words, *Synaxis*, *Collecta*, *Conventus*.

From apostolic times, the Church was wont to sanctify the night by watching and prayer, and these night-watchings took the name of *Vigils*. Tertullian calls them *nocturnal convocations*, and the pagans took occasion of these night meetings to build up against the Christians a whole framework of slanderous reports. But the Church meant thereby to atone for the high revel and base orgies of pagans, and to comply with the divine precept: "In the nights lift up your hands to the holy places, and bless ye the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

During the persecutions, these meetings took place in the catacombs. In the times of peace, they were held in the church of the martyr, whose memory was to be celebrated on the morrow. There, psalms and hymns were sung, and a spiritual conference followed, presided over and directed by the Bishop; and the meeting was closed by the celebration of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

Mass, at which the faithful received Holy Communion.

However, these vigils were often protracted during a considerable part of the following day. They were then called *νυχθήμεραι*; and St. Gregory Nazianzen describes in pathetic verses the sterling faith of those early Christians, whom their fervour urged to spend their lives in these *night-daily* stations, occupied in the recitation of psalms, taking but a scanty rest on the dust of the bare floor, their flesh, as it were, melting away at the fervour of their vigils.

“οἷτος χαμεύνης, καὶ κόνει βεβρωμένος,  
καὶ σάρκας ἐξέτηκεν ἀγρυπνίαις,  
ψαλμωδίαις τε, καὶ στάσει νυχθημέρῳ.”<sup>1</sup>

13. It would be difficult to assign the exact date of the origin of the Christian station. Like almost every other ecclesiastical institution, this holy practice began insensibly to grow among the faithful, informal at first and hardly noticeable, like the tiny rivulet near the summit of a hill; then it formed itself into a calm and steady stream as it came down from the mountain of time, until it became that mighty river on whose waters the soul can sail in safety towards the shores of eternity.

The Stations undoubtedly belong to the more remote antiquity. Tertullian (+ 240) complains that on Station days a heathen husband would rather invite his wife to the baths.<sup>2</sup> St. Leo the Great

<sup>1</sup> In Carmine Cygneo, v. 576 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> “Si statio facienda est, maritus de die condicat ad balnea.” Ad Uxorem, l. ii. c iv.

(+461) often alludes to this practice in his sermons. Among the succeeding Pontiffs, none contributed so much to the increase and orderly organisation of them, as St. Gregory the Great (+604), as we gather from the testimony of John the Deacon, in the life of this Pope.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen how he would every year betake himself to the Church of Sancta Sabina on foot, on the first day in Lent, and there, kneeling in the posture of a humble penitent, receive the symbolic ashes on his shaven head.<sup>2</sup>

But the spirit of evil insinuates itself into the best of institutions, and disorders crept into these nocturnal meetings to such an extent,<sup>3</sup> that it was deemed prudent to suppress them. But this was only later, about the eighth or ninth century, at which time, the prayers wont to be recited for the dead at night, and which on that account were called *Vigiliæ*, received the substituted name of Office for the Dead. However, the holy practice of praying at night remained in full vigour in the monastic orders, in which the night office, the Matins with the Lauds, divided the night into four parts, not unlike the division of military watches to which the Evangelist St. Matthew alludes in the fact of the apparition of Jesus walking on the waters.<sup>4</sup>

But then the laity, too, were admitted to take part in the divine Psalmody. Many, both men and

<sup>1</sup> Lib. ii. c. ii. and vi.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. iv. p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> See the 25th sermon among those falsely attributed to St. Augustine.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xiv. 25. Cf. St. Jerome's Commentary in this place.



women, had a scruple to be absent therefrom, and we read of Charlemagne that he would take an active part in the divine office, nay, that he would preside and survey the orderly recitation of the same.

14. After the discipline in regard to Stations had thus been regulated by St. Gregory, the custom prevailed that, on the approaching of a festival, the faithful should be admonished to meet, early in the morning of that day, in some special church, where prayers were to be recited and mass celebrated, and this first meeting was called the *Collecta*, or *gathering*. Then they all *proceeded* in due order to the Church of the Station, where the Solemn Mass was sung, and the Homily took place. This church was later on called by the foreign name of *Galilæa*, possibly in allusion to the promise of our Lord, that He would be seen by the disciples in Galilee.<sup>1</sup>

15. And as we mentioned *processions*, it will perhaps not be without interest to some of our readers, to know that these had long been in use among the pagans, before the Catholic Church adopted them, as a part of her liturgy. The *πρόσοδοι*, as they called them, were supplications made by them, whilst they repaired to the altars of the gods. Plato in his laws orders that such processions and pomps should be performed in honour of the gods : *πρόσόδους καὶ πομπὰς*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 7, 10. But it is difficult to assign any satisfactory reason for this denomination. In subsequent times, the name Galilee was given to a portico which was usually built at or near the west end of the great abbey churches, as can be seen at the western extremity both of Durham and Ely Cathedrals.

θεοῖς ποιῆσθαι. In these processions they used instrumental music, dancing, torches and singing of hymns, which Athenagoras appropriately called προσόδιαμέλη.

The Christians, too, sang in their processions; but what they mostly sang were the *litanies*, so called from the Greek word λιτανένω, "to pray earnestly."<sup>1</sup> These litanies consisted of the invocation of many saints and martyrs, especially those of a local interest. They usually began with the Greek words κύριε ἐλέησον, *Lord have mercy on us*, which words were no less in use among the Jews than among the Christians. They were familiar also to pagan ears, and St. Austin remarks<sup>2</sup> that this invocation was common to Latins as well as to barbarians.

These processions, with the invocations in the form of litanies which accompanied them, in course of time took the name of *Rogations*. These are still in use in the Catholic Church on the feast of St. Mark, and on three consecutive days previous to the festival of the Ascension of our Lord. The former are still qualified as *major Litanies* in the Roman Missal, and are commonly attributed to St. Gregory; the latter *minor Litanies*, and their author is usually said by ecclesiastical writers to have been St. Mamertus, the illustrious Bishop of Vienne in Gaul. However, not a few among the ecclesiastical writers assign to them a more ancient institution, and account for the distinction into major and minor from the greater or lesser assistance of the faithful; while other writers

<sup>1</sup> See Bona, Div. Psalmodia, c. 25, met. 31, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 178.

do not hesitate to trace back the origin of this distinction to pagan usages and institutions.<sup>1</sup>

16. Now, to come back to the point in question, the pilgrims, in coming to Rome, often had for their object to assist at the Stations, and perform with the faithful the annexed devotions. Thus, to quote one fact, when Charlemagne went to Rome for the first time, in the year 774, he made it a point to assist at the solemn mass which the Pope himself celebrated on Easter Sunday in St. Mary Major's, on Easter Monday in St. Peter's, and on Easter Tuesday in St. Paul's Outside the Walls, which days are to the present time the days assigned for the Stations in these churches.

To these Stations copious Indulgences have been successively annexed by the Sovereign Pontiffs. It would be difficult, not to say impossible, to ascertain the date of the different concessions. Like so many other institutions, this offset of ecclesiastical liturgy, which now has put forth such mighty and vigorous shoots and blossoms, springing forth from the grain of mustard seed sown in this world by the Son of God Himself,<sup>2</sup> is rooted at a considerable depth in the ground of time. The grant of Indulgences in connection with the Stations is so ancient, that the Church in times gone by strictly forbade any catalogues of the same to be published, as it was not possible to

<sup>1</sup> See the *Isagoge Liturgica* inserted in vol. ix. of the Maurinian edition of the works of St. Gregory the Great, Venice, 1772.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 31.

check them by the original documents.<sup>1</sup> At last, Pius VI., by his decree of the 9th July 1777,<sup>2</sup> approved a new regulation of these Indulgences which had been previously drawn up by the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences after careful study and mature deliberation.<sup>3</sup>

17. Lastly, in connection with the tradition on Indulgences in the first part of the Middle Ages, can be mentioned the foundations which the faithful made of churches, monasteries, and hospices for pilgrims, homes for the poor, and hospitals for the sick. The world at large is still covered with such pious institutions. Even in countries rebellious to the Church, the efforts to substitute humane societies for Christian guilds and brotherhoods, platonic philanthropy for real genuine and supernatural charity, have not been able to root out all such charitable foundations.

Rome, of all places, was the centre where all these different institutions could be seen, inspired by the same spirit, illumined by the same faith, bound up together by the same bonds of divine love; and the eternal city was, as it is still now, notwithstanding the furious blast, a delicious garden, planted with all the variety of home-bred and exotic flowers, whose aromatic perfumes are wafted through the air, under a sun of eternal spring.

Here, indeed, every need and infirmity of life had

<sup>1</sup> Decr. auth. n. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rescr. auth. i. n. 313.

<sup>3</sup> Beringer, "Les Indulgences," t. i. p. 423.

been met with a corresponding charity. There were hospitals for every kind of disease, and men who volunteered their services; there were original endowments for marriageable girls, and pensions for the aged; asylums for orphans, and homes for the blind; free schools for the learning of different trades, and colleges for the education of young levites, from all nations; shelters for pilgrims from every part of the world, and as many guilds as there are trades for the requirements of life. There were no poor rates, but voluntary benefactors were never wanting; the poor felt no reluctance in knocking at doors, over which the Gospel device was written, as the invariable motto of the inmates: "The charity of Christ presseth us,"<sup>1</sup> and they could stretch out their hands without the blush of shame on their face, to receive that alms for which they, the door-keepers of heaven, could in return introduce their benefactors into the "everlasting dwellings."<sup>2</sup>

Now, the motive which prompted the erection of these pious establishments was, for the greater part, that their founders might thereby provide for their souls' future state: *in remedium animæ suæ*.

This clause usually appears in connection with these pious foundations. Thus, to quote only one instance, Flavius Belisarius, the glorious general of Justinian, who alone would have sufficed to make illustrious that Emperor's fame, who freed Italy from the domination of the Goths, and ruled it

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 9.



with imperial power—Belisarius is recorded to have built a *Xenodochium* or hospital on the Flaminian Way, with an adjoining oratory dedicated to the Mother of God, under the title of *Sancta Maria in Trivio*, which is still extant. A writer of the eleventh or twelfth century has recorded in the Latin epigraphic style of that epoch, the motives which prompted the noble patrician, Belisarius, to build the church. Namely, it was *to obtain the pardon of his sins*; wherefore any one entering the sacred temple is earnestly requested to pray to God that He may have mercy on his soul.

HANC VIR PATRICIVS VILISARIVS VRBIS AMICVS  
OB CVLPÆ VENIAM CONDIDIT ECCLESIAM  
HANC HIC CIRCO PEDEM SACRAM QVI PONIS IN AEDEM  
VT MISERETVR EVM SAEPE PRECARE DEVM  
IANVA HAEC EST TEMPLI DOMINO DEFENSA POTENTI<sup>1</sup>

Such foundations then were made by the penitents with the confident trust, that they could serve as a release to their souls oppressed by sin—not, indeed, to take away the guilt thereof, for that is the work of contrition and absolution only; nor to cure their evil habits, for that is done only by contrary acts, but to avert that punishment to which, according to Almighty God's justice, the sinful soul is obnoxious. St. Peter Damian confirms this interpretation of such a practice. "When we receive," says he,<sup>2</sup> "from the penitents a plot of land, we

<sup>1</sup> See Armellini, *Le Chiese di Roma*. Roma, 1891, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. iv. ep. 21.

remit them a quantity of their penance proportionate to their gift."

Now, this was a common practice at that time, as the saint's words indicate. The Church knew it, and did not oppose it; she must then, unless we accuse her of deceiving her children, have ratified these remittals of penances; and as what she looses on earth is loosened also in heaven, these remittals must have been valid also in the sight of God. In a word, through that means also, she granted Indulgences.

## CHAPTER VII

### “DIEU LE VEUT”

“Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Israel.”—2 MAC. xv. 16.

#### FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The works of man and the works of God—The Church a work of God—The Christians of the East—The Popes’ concern for them—Urban II. and the first Crusade—The annexed Indulgence—The second Crusade and St. Bernard—Indulgences for the building of churches—The origin of the *Bulla Cruciatæ*—Indulgences means of promoting works of art—Indulgences for the translation of Relics—For the Dedication of Churches—Indulgences granted by the Bishops—Bishops apply to the Sovereign Pontiff—New motives for granting more copious Indulgences—Henry II.’s penance.

I. BETWEEN the works of man and the works of God there is a marked difference. To the works of his hand man cannot impart the principle of life; he cannot produce a vital handiwork; he can at best but imitate the outward aspect of nature’s animated beings, their colour, their shape. The effect of his work can only be an inert mass, which, from the moment of its production, begins insensibly to decay, until it utterly perishes. No wonder, for man’s power is necessarily finite, and so all his works must needs bear on them the stamp of gradual decline, of mortality, and destruction.

But it is not so with the works of God. He is

essential life, in whom was life from the beginning. Nay, according to St. Cyril and St. Augustine's reading of the third verse of St. John's first chapter, "What was made in Him was life"—ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶν ἡν. All created things before they were made, that is from all eternity, had their being in the mind of God, not only full of life, but living God's own life.<sup>1</sup>

And when the appointed time came, creatures came out of His hands as He had decreed. On the more noble ones, endowed with vital power from within, the Divine blessing was conferred, as a token of lasting fecundity: "Increase and multiply."<sup>2</sup>

If the Church, then, is but a mere human institution, we must resign ourselves to see it gradually decline and fall away from its first beauty and splendour, like those magnificent cathedrals which no art of man can preserve from decay; we must own that it received its finishing stroke and reached its utmost perfection in the time of Christ and His Apostles, but that since then to the end of time, it must be subjected to a continual falling away from its first grandeur, until it crumbles into dust and vanishes away.

2. But the Church is not the work of man, it is the work of God. Indeed it is one of the noblest works that, in the spiritual order, has ever come out of His hands. It then must bear an impress of His

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Summa Theol. P. I. q. xviii. a. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. i. 28.

life, not reflected in its outward structure only, but pervading and quickening its inmost constitution; pouring incessantly into its veins a luxuriant stream of health-giving blood, flowing into it from the sacred wound of the dying Saviour's side, and daily supplied by the renewal of His death on our altars.

Now if the Church is thus a divine institution, living a supernatural and unending life, it must have, like all living creatures, its natural growth, its gradual progress, its increasing development; and this growth, this progress, this development, is the principle of new and more vigorous actions, and numerous operations, as the works of a man in his mature years surpass in number and in vigour those of his infancy.

And that the Church is thus, in virtue of the principle of life infused into it, a growing body, is made manifest by our blessed Lord Himself who, under the appellation of the Kingdom of Heaven, likens it to "*a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which is the least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.*"<sup>1</sup>

No wonder, then, that the Church should, in the course of time, have magnified her own actions, aggrandised her own institutions; that, to her wailings in the Catacombs, should have succeeded the glad song of triumph in the Basilicas; that she

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 31, 32.



should begin to run her course as a giant, who before was bound in swaddling clothes ; that she, who once was compelled to take refuge in the very bowels of the earth, should now appear in the full light of day, surrounded with "all the glory of the King's daughter, in golden borders, clothed round about with varieties."<sup>1</sup>

It was natural to expect, and so it came to pass, that, as time went on, and the Church grew stronger, she should have developed and strengthened her doctrine, marked out her liturgy, fixed her discipline, in a word, that she should have asserted her own authority, by a more ample and spontaneous exercise of the power given her by Jesus Christ.

And so we shall not wonder if, in the matter of Indulgences, we see the Church, in the new epoch we are going to consider, enlarge upon what she had hitherto practised, lay open the sacred coffers committed to her care, and lavish her riches upon her children, with indeed queen-like generosity.

As she censured new errors, and defined new dogmas in her councils ; as she decreed the erection of new bishoprics, and fixed the rights of bishops ; as she began to possess territory of her own, and thus gave rise to a new temporal principality ; as she mitigated, or tolerated the going into disuse of old penances, and established new ones, so also did she grant Pardons, or Indulgences in a new form, and with new liberality, and thus made it more easy for

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xliv. 14, 15.

the faithful to atone for the debt incurred by their sins, relaxing the rigour of penances without a diminution of their value.

This is what the new period we enter upon, which dates from the time of the Crusades, and comes down to the time of the first solemn Jubilee, will, we trust, abundantly illustrate. In this epoch we shall see that, if the Church had hitherto been sparing of the satisfactions of Christ and of His saints, she now began to apply them with greater facility, and magnified her bounty into generosity. If, hitherto, she had exacted long and severe penances before she would again admit the sinner to her communion, and had seldom relaxed but portions of them, now she declared herself satisfied with a prayer, an almsgiving, a visit to a sanctuary, an enrolling oneself in the Christian armies for the rescue of the Holy Land, freely remitting, in the name of Christ, the rest of the penance to be performed.

She had possessed the power to do so from the very beginning of her institution, but the time had not yet come for her to exercise the fulness of that power. He who watches the growth of the smallest herb among His Creation, and has decreed the time when it shall bloom forth and produce its seed, had also designed that the Crusades should be the starting-point of a new era, an era of mercy and of grace for men, when the Church should pour forth the accumulated satisfactions of Christ and of His Saints, for the remission of men's sins.

3. At the epoch to which our perusal of the Church's history has brought us, viz., the second half of the eleventh century, the eyes of the Western Church were anxiously turned towards her sister of the East.

There was more in that look than a sister's compassion, there was a mother's solicitous care; there were pangs and throes, as it were of child-bearing. The Holy Land had fallen into the hands of the sworn enemies of Christ. The spots once hallowed by the presence of the Saviour, and consecrated by the sweat of His brow, those cities once the scenes of His love for men, and the silent witnesses of His tender mercies, had now become tributaries of the Crescent. The churches erected in memory of our Lord's mysteries had been turned into pagan temples, wherein an infamous and superstitious worship was paid to the devil, and nameless abominations were daily committed. To speak only of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, it was polluted by the orgies of the Mussulmans, whilst many among the other churches served as stables for horses.

The Christians were not better treated than the Holy Places. If the Mussulman did not respect the temples built of stone and mortar, why should he respect Christ's own living members? Had not Mohammed sworn a war to the death against the followers of Jesus?

And so, the Christians of the Holy Land were overpowered by a cruel tyranny, oppressed with

taxes, treated with scorn, abused and reviled in sundry ways. Children were taken and constrained to apostatise, and if they refused they were put to death; priests and deacons were slaughtered in sanctuaries, and the holiness of consecrated virgins was not safe, even in the recesses of their cloistered walls.

Rumours of this ill-treatment were continuously wafted from the East to the West, from Jerusalem to Rome, from Nazareth and Bethlehem to Milan and Lyons. The numerous pilgrims who came back from their journey of *redemption*, told their fellow-men in mournful accents, what they had suffered, and what greater evils the native Christians had to endure; and there was through the West an upheaval of indignation, mixed with a yearning for speedy vengeance.

4. To such a cry of misery, the Popes could not remain indifferent. They knew the evil, and they felt it, as a father feels the sufferings of his children; and their one great wish was that they might relieve their flock from such a state of oppression and bondage.

The Church had not yet entered into the second millennium of her existence, and one of the successors of St. Peter, who united with a fatherly solicitude for the welfare of Christians, a perfect knowledge of philosophy and mathematics, Sylvester II. (+ 1003), better known as the famous monk Gerbert, the once illustrious preceptor of kings and emperors, felt his

heart break within him, at the thought of the hard captivity endured in the East by so many children of the Gospel. The West was then a prey to religious wars and civil dissensions; nevertheless, Sylvester shrunk not before the idea of sending throughout Christendom an encyclical letter to princes and nations, urging them to rise as one man and come to the rescue of the Christians suffering in the East. His voice did not find an echo in the selfish West; however, the world was shaken, and to Sylvester is due the glory of having been the first to speak to the world in favour of his Eastern children.

Three-fourths of a century elapsed, and another Pope, second to none of his predecessors in virtue and courage, attempted to revive the dying spark which Sylvester II. had kindled in favour of the Christians of Jerusalem. St. Gregory VII., the renowned Hildebrand, attempted (1074) to rouse European princes to this work. Waiving the differences which had set him at variance with Henry IV., Emperor of Germany, he wrote him a letter, in which he described, in a vivid manner, the pitiful state of the Christians of the East, and what vexations they were exposed to at the hands of the Mussulman despots.

The Pope added that already he had sent numerous letters to the Christian princes, begging them earnestly to lend him their help in such an important enterprise, and that many of them had not hesitated to answer his call, being willing to assist him in the holy undertaking. He then urged the Emperor to



do the same; and to encourage him the more, protested that he would be happy to go in person, and fight for the deliverance of the Holy Places, and of the Christians of Palestine.

But it was not in the destinies of Providence that the great Pontiff, whom so many works had already made illustrious, should add to his name the glory of initiating the Crusades. Twenty-one years elapsed after the writing of this letter. During this time, the sympathies of the faithful were strengthened with regard to the state of their Eastern brethren. The hearts and minds of all were burning with a holy zeal of hastening to the rescue of the tomb of Christ, or dying in the saving combat. Only a favourable occasion was wanted for the ever-growing flame to burst out into open blaze.

5. The moment came, and it fell to the lot of another successor of St. Peter, Urban II., to add to the lustre of his Pontificate the glory of becoming the mainspring and organiser of the Crusades. It does not fall within our purpose to speak at length of these expeditions. Much could be said to vindicate these bold and noble enterprises from the calumnies of which they have been the object. Such writers as are wont to judge of a work by its effects, or to reckon others' ardour by their own coldness, will not see in the Crusades anything but the swelling of fanatic enthusiasm, and a door opened to licentiousness and to the relaxation of morals, similar to those observers whose judgment of a noble monument

is guided only by the consideration of some defective details.

For us, apart from the result of these enterprises, and the defects inherent to every human institution, we cannot but recognise in the motives that prompted these immense levies of men, and in the disinterestedness with which these brave knights left the comforts of their homes, the signs of a generosity of heart and of a quickness of faith which is the greatest praise of the character, both civil and religious, of the Middle Ages.

However, the Crusades, acknowledged unanimously by the people to be God's holy will, are among those events ordained by Divine Providence to be, for the Church, a means of asserting her vitality, of tending to fuller growth, and to an ampler display of her discipline.

The man whom the Holy Ghost had chosen to be the promoter of this work, was Peter the Hermit. While at Jerusalem on a pilgrimage, he had heard the burning words of Simeon, Patriarch of that city, asking for help from the West. Our Divine Saviour Himself, tradition relates, had spoken to him whilst he was praying in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. "Arise, Peter," He had said, "and hasten to preach the Crusade, for I shall be with thee."

He came to Clermont, where a council of two hundred bishops was being held (1095), gave the Pope an account of his mission, and with his blessing began to preach the Crusade. His first harangue was

addressed to the Council. His zeal acted like an electric current. The Pope was singularly moved. He rose up in the council, and, by a pathetic discourse, roused the clergy and princes assembled, and all with one voice exclaimed, *Dieu le veut*, "It is God's will."

But, for the labours of this holy enterprise the Pope granted a compensation. He took it out of the treasury of the Church. He declared in the council that he remitted, to those who would take up arms against the infidels, the penance due to their sins, and to those who would die in the combat, the pardon of their sins and life eternal.

The decision was formulated in the second canon of this council in these words: "Whoever shall go to Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God, out of pure devotion, and not for the purpose of obtaining honour or money, let the journey be counted in lieu of all penance."<sup>1</sup>

Every one knows the effect which this promise produced on the assembly. All on the spot declared the Crusade to be God's work, and swore to take the Cross. The electric current, bursting from within the assembly, overspread the whole of France, of Germany, of England, of Italy—the haughty nobleman and the humble peasant, the warlike knight and the contemplative monk, mingling together in one mighty army, with one design, that of freeing the Holy Places,

<sup>1</sup> "Quicumque pro sola devotione, non pro honoris vel pecunie adeptione ad liberandam Ecclesiam Dei Jerusalem profectus fuerit, iter illud pro omni pœnitentia reputetur." Conc. Claramont, Mansi, Sac. Conc. Nov. et Ampl. Collect. Ven. 1775, t. xx. p. 816.

with one hope of reward, that of obtaining the remission of the debt due to their sins.

It was a marvellous sight to see those hundreds of thousands of men leaving the comforts of their home, the company of their friends, and undertaking, with the badge of salvation on their breast, a long and perilous journey, with no other hope than that of atoning for their past transgressions, with no other pay than the Indulgence.

6. Doubtless, the Spirit of God must have been with His Church, in inspiring her with this action of opening her spiritual treasury, and alluring thereby the faithful to go to the rescue of the Holy Places. Otherwise, we must confess that He allowed the whole Church to fall into error—the pastors by teaching falsehood, the faithful by believing it. For we do not read that any one contested the action of the Church, protested against the right of the Pope, or at least denounced the Indulgence as scandalous and a source of relaxation. It is true that some, in the course of time, made use of the Crusades for selfish ends, and even for unlawful purposes; but not for such as these was the Indulgence, nor could their wickedness taint and sully that which was essentially good.

In reality, this concession of the entire remission of the canonical penance, as well as of the punishment due to the justice of God on account of sin, was but the confirmation of a right which the Church had always possessed, but which she exercised in different manners, according to the differences of

times and places. There was no innovation in the matter; the form of concession alone varied, as we have seen it varying, from the time of persecution to the times of peace which succeeded.

The concession was more ample, for seldom had the Church granted to penitents a full remission of their penance. But here, was granted the remission of the whole penance due to sins up to the time of the departure of the pilgrims, and in case of death the pardon of their sins and life eternal, viz., the remission of the debt contracted until the moment of death, provided, of course, the Crusader died in the grace of God.<sup>1</sup>

Nor will it be objected that there was not a sufficient motive for granting this Indulgence. The work was one of great importance. It redounded directly to the honour and glory of God, and to the good of His Church. It was difficult of execution, and entailed many sacrifices, and the Church would show herself more generous than she had ever been, by applying more abundantly to the noble Crusader the wealth of the satisfactions of Christ. And as the proud minds and unsubdued hearts of these Northern men could not easily be brought to go through the regular course of tears, fastings, and prostrations enjoined by the sacred canons, the Church would count the energy, strength, and valour they displayed for the cause of Christ, as a sufficient substitution, and grant the Crusader

<sup>1</sup> Synodalis Concio Urbani Pp. II. Mansi, *ibid.*, p. 821.



a full and ample pardon in consideration of what he had already done, and in the hope that he would achieve still greater things.

Who will find fault with the Church? Who will accuse her of squandering the Precious Blood of Jesus? Indeed, if ever there was a reason for making such ample distribution, it was certainly in these circumstances. If ever the satisfactions of Christ found a generous soil in which to be sown, it was the burning hearts of those noble knights, for whom life was as nothing, provided the Sepulchre of the Saviour was set free.

7. St. Bernard was the preacher of the second crusade (1146). The eloquent Abbot of Clairvaux has left us, in some of his epistles, unequivocal expressions of the sentiments of esteem which he had for Indulgences.<sup>1</sup> In his letter to the bishop, clergy, and people of Spiers, in Bavaria, he warmly exhorts them to join the Crusades, alluring them by the promised Indulgence.

Commenting upon this text of St. Paul to the Corinthians,<sup>2</sup> "Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of (plentiful) salvation," St. Bernard says: "I say to you, The Lord your God is tempting you. He looks down upon the children of men, if perchance there be any that understand and

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 322, according to the Paris edition, but 363 in Edit. Venet., 1750. According to this edition of the works of St. Bernard, compiled by Horstius and Mabillon, the letter is entitled: "To the Clergy and People of Eastern France."

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.

make inquiries, and bewail their state. For the Lord hath mercy on His people, and to those who have grievously fallen, He sets forth a wholesome remedy.

"Sinners, despair not, the Lord is gracious. Had He wished to punish you, not only would He not have asked for your services, but He would not have accepted them even when offered.

"Again, I say unto you, consider the riches of the goodness of God: observe the design of His compassion. He makes Himself needy, or feigns to be so, being merely desirous to supply your wants. He wishes to be held as a debtor, that He may give a recompense to those that fight for Him—the remission of their offences and the grant of everlasting glory. Blessed then do I call the generation which is visited by such a fruitful season of *Indulgence*, and which is found living in a year so peaceable on the part of the Lord, and which is so truly a Jubilee. This blessing is, in fact, diffused throughout the whole world, and all emulously fly to the sign of life.

"Thou hast now, valiant soldier, brave warrior, an opportunity of fighting without danger: here to win is glory, and to die is gain. If thou be a discreet and industrious merchant, if thou be a trafficker of this world, behold great goods do I show thee, take heed lest they perish.

"Receive the sign of the Cross, and thou shalt likewise obtain the *Indulgence* of all *thou hast confessed with a contrite heart.*"

Here, we have the last father of the Church speaking in most eulogistic words of the Indulgences granted by the Popes to Crusaders. Like St. Cyprian and the fathers of the Council of Trent, he recommends true contrition and humble confession as an essential condition for gaining the Indulgence. For no man, as we have said, can obtain from God the remission of the penalty due to his sins, unless he be contrite for them, and unless he come, like those that believed at the preaching of St. Paul, "confessing and declaring his deeds."<sup>1</sup>

In several other places of his writings, the holy Abbot of Clairvaux speaks with similar emphasis of Pardons and Indulgences. "Fearing for the multitude of my iniquities, but trusting in Thy mercy, I confess to thee, my Creator and Redeemer, who hast promised that after guilt, pardon and indulgence shall be obtained through a pure and humble confession; for in sins was I conceived, in sins was I brought up, and in sins have I conversed for the whole of my life up to the present day."<sup>2</sup> And further, "He that truly repents and is really sorry, will undoubtedly and without delay obtain indulgence."<sup>3</sup>

8. The Crusades mark a new epoch in the history of Indulgences. That outburst of faith on the part of Christians urged the Church to be more liberal towards her children, and to fling open to them the

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Tract. de Interiori Domo., cap. xix. Ed. Mabillon.

<sup>3</sup> Cap. xxi.

treasures which had been committed to her. It made her the more conscious of the existence of a power which had lain, as it were, half dormant in her bosom, and which she had hitherto but scantily and reservedly exercised. From this time forward, we shall see the gradual unfolding of this power prompted by her charity and compassion for poor human nature.

At this time, then, her motives for granting Indulgences became more varied and numerous. For instance, the contributing towards a public work from which much good was expected, the taking part in a war against infidels, the building of a sanctuary, the dedication of a church, the canonisation of a saint, or the translation of a relic, were taken as so many occasions for granting Indulgences to the faithful.

In 1118, Ildephonsus or Alphonsus, King of Aragon, recovered after a great battle the city of Saragossa from the Moors, who had held it for the space of nearly four hundred years. His first care was for the restoration of religion in a city which had once been illustrious among all in Spain, for its glorious phalanx of martyrs and its special devotion to the Mother of God. In consequence, Peter Libranus was elected Bishop, and was by the King sent to the Roman Pontiff, Gelasius II., to be consecrated by him.

The Pope welcomed with special kindness the Bishop-elect, consecrated him with his own hands, and delivered to him letters in favour of the Christian army which was fighting against the infidels.

In these letters, the Pope granted, *through the merits of the saints and the prayers of the whole Catholic Church*, an Indulgence to those who, having *received penance*, would die in this expedition.<sup>1</sup> An Indulgence was likewise granted to those who would work towards the restoration of the Church of Saragossa, or who would contribute an alms towards the maintenance of the clergy.

As the Papal Brief left it to the discretion of the Bishops to fix the extent of the Indulgence in proportion to the good works accomplished, Peter Libranus, on his return to Saragossa, sent by his Archdeacon Miorrand an encyclical letter to the Catholics of the whole world, apprising them of the miserable state of his Church, and urging them to generosity by the promise of holy Indulgences. "Relying on the divine clemency," says the Bishop, "and on the authority of our Lord Gelasius, Pope (you shall find, here above written, a copy of the letters of the Cross, which we keep under seal in our Church), and of our Lord Bernard, Archbishop of Toledo, and of the Legate of the Holy Roman Church, and of all the bishops of Spain, we remit . . . of penance."<sup>2</sup> The blank was to be filled by each bishop, according to his discretion.

<sup>1</sup> "Si quis vestrum, accepta de peccatis suis pœnitentia, in expeditione hac mortuus fuerit, nos eum sanctorum meritis et totius Catholicæ Ecclesiæ precibus a suorum vinculis peccatorum absolvimus." Baronius A.D. 1118, n. xviii., who for the taking of Saragossa gives the erroneous date 1115.

<sup>2</sup> "Nos eis divina clementia ac Domini Gelasii Papæ auctoritate freti (exemplar litterarum Crucis, quas in nostra Ecclesia signatas habemus,



9. It is to be remarked that the Pope's Bull is styled in Peter's encyclical letter, "the letters of the Cross"—*litteræ crucis*. This denomination, and the purport of the letter, have led grave authors to trace to this fact the origin of that which has become so famous in the annals of the Church of Spain, from the second half of the sixteenth century down to the present day, under the name of "*Bulla Cruciatæ*," the Crusade Bull.

This Bull, a true summary of privileges repeatedly granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to the Kings of Spain in favour of their subjects, may be said to be based on the principles of the letter of Pope Gelasius II. to the Bishop of Saragossa. For, the Crusade Bull, though emanating from the Roman Pontiffs, is entrusted for its execution to one of the Prelates of Spain, habitually the Archbishop of Toledo, to whom it belongs to fix the quantity of the good work to be performed; and it is granted in favour of those who either go in person to fight for the liberty of the Church from her Mussulman enemies, or who, being themselves unable to go to war, do so by deputy, or again contribute an alms towards the same purpose or towards some equivalent work of devotion, appointed by the Commissary of the Crusade Bull.

But, as it habitually happens in similar matters,

in suprascripta pagina scriptum invenietis) atque D. Bernardi Archiepiscopuli Toletani, et Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ Legati, ac omnium Episcoporum Hispaniæ . . . pœnitentiæ remittimus."—Ibid. n. xix.

this privilege, in course of time, became more comprehensive, and extended over a wider range of persons. To the Indulgences which alone were at first contained in the Bull, other boons were gradually added, so that, though numerically one, it is virtually complex. In its more ample form, besides a special grant of Indulgences for the living and the dead, and, under special conditions, a formal participation in the goods of the Church, it comprehends a partial or total exemption from the effects of an interdict, a dispensation from fasting and abstinence, a greater facility for obtaining absolution from reserved sins, the power of having vows commuted for other good works, and of coming to a composition with regard to ill-gotten property. And this privilege extends to all the provinces which are at present, or formerly were, subject to the King of Spain. It applies even to persons who repair thither, were it only to avail themselves of the privilege.

Although the wars against the infidels may be said to have practically ceased, yet the offerings made by the faithful as a condition for availing themselves of the privilege, are not without a holy destination. They are employed chiefly for the maintenance of divine worship; and the "Fabrica" of St. Peter's in Rome, which has daily to face heavy expenses, comes in for a large share of the same.

Such writers as are ever on the watch for any

opportunity of maligning the Church and her institutions, have only seen in the Crusade Bull a means of raising money for the gratification of her rapacious prelates. Of a different nature, we trust, would their judgments have been, had they taken the trouble of investigating more closely into the real destination of these treasures. At the sight of the numberless charitable institutions supported by these funds, they might have persuaded themselves that if Rome is not ashamed to stretch out one hand to receive, it is only that with the other she may give ; but, faithful to the Master's precept, she does not allow the former to know what the latter has done.<sup>1</sup>

10. But be this said parenthetically. What belongs to our subject now is that Indulgences became the means of building those magnificent churches and cathedrals of the Middle Ages, which are still the wonder of our times. The workmen wanted no other pay.

When the Friars Servants of Mary had determined to build in Florence a church worthy of the Mother of God, in memory of the miraculous painting of her Annunciation, St. Manettus, the General, went to the Pope, and asked him to grant Indulgences to those who would contribute in some way towards the building of that church. Clement IV. heard his prayer, and granted (1265) twenty days' Indulgence to those who, being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins, would help the Servants of Mary

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 3.

towards that holy work (*qui eis ad id manum porrexerint adjutricem*).<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1308 a large fire burst out at St. John Lateran's in Rome, and set on flames both the palace and the church adjoining. All was destroyed, except the *Sancta Sanctorum* and the wooden altar in the shape of an ark, on which St. Peter had celebrated the sacred mysteries, and which some holy persons had had the courage to save from the destroying fire. The Pope was then Clement V., famous in history for his transfer of the See of Peter from Rome to Avignon, and for the abolition of the Order of Knights-Templar. He thought at once of rebuilding the Church, and devoted to that effect large sums of money. All, without distinction of rank, sex, or condition, took part in the works, and, to encourage them, the Pope granted Indulgences.<sup>2</sup>

But it would be too long, and beyond the scope of the present work, to enumerate all the sumptuous temples of which the bestowal of papal or episcopal Indulgences was either the determining cause, or at least the prompting motive. England, of all countries, is still scattered over with sumptuous cathedrals and majestic abbeys. They are the admiration of countrymen and foreigners alike, of Christians and unbelievers. But, had it not been for those spiri-

<sup>1</sup> Ann. Ord. Serv. B. M. V., t. i. cent. i. l. iii. c. ix. See Soulier, O. S. M. Storia dei Sette Santi Fondatori dell' Ordine de' Servi di Maria. Roma, 1888, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. xci. n. 28.

tual favours by which the Church sweetly prevailed on the noble and on the poor alike to offer, both in their own way, their voluntary contributions towards the building of these imperishable monuments, these stones, now so eloquent, would remain, for the greater part, but dumb witnesses of selfishness and indolence, like the coffers of gold buried in the cellars of an Indian prince.

11. The translation of Relics of Saints became also the occasion for granting new Indulgences. Such an event was then a universal cause of rejoicing, and the Church thought she could call upon those friends of God and ask them to help, out of their abundant funds, their more destitute brethren.

Matthew of Paris, in his "Chronicon," tells us that, in 1247, the Master of the Knights-Templar and that of the Knights-Hospitaller sent to England, through a Templar, a portion of the Precious Blood of our Blessed Lord, in a vessel of crystal, accompanied with the attestation of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and of the Bishops, Abbots, and Lords of Holy Land. King Henry III. received it with great signs of joy, and sent letters to all the lords of his kingdom, summoning them for the day of the translation of St. Edward, viz., the thirteenth of October, that they might be present at the procession of the relic.

The King did on this occasion what his brother-in-law, St. Louis of France, had done to honour the true Cross. He fasted on the eve of the feast, on



bread and water, and on the day itself he solemnly carried the relic from the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, to that of St. Peter at Westminster, to which he gave it.

The Bishop of Norwich celebrated Mass there, and delivered a sermon in which he related how this relic had long been an object of veneration in Syria, and had been brought to England that it might there be placed in safety, against the outrages of Mahomedans. He explained from an apocryphal book how St. Joseph of Arimathea, having taken down from the Cross the Sacred Body of Jesus, had carefully collected the Blood from His Sacred Wounds, and the water with which he had washed His Body, and had shared the precious relic with Nicodemus, who helped Joseph in burying Jesus.

Thus had this sacred deposit been preserved from father to son, until it had come into the hands of the Patriarch Robert, who then held the See of Jerusalem, and who had given it to England. He concluded by granting, in the name of all the prelates there present, an Indulgence of six years, and one hundred and forty days to all those who would come and pay honour to the Precious Blood.<sup>1</sup>

It is commonly known that Alexander IV., in the year 1255, wrote to St. Louis, King of France, a Bull praising him for his admirable virtues and fortitude. In this Bull, the Pope grants, to him, to his wife, and

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, l. lxxxii. 66.

to his successors, the privilege of not incurring excommunication or interdict without a special order from the Holy See. He also grants ten days' Indulgence to all those who will pray God for the King during his lifetime, and after his death, for the space of ten years.<sup>1</sup>

12. Next to the Crusades, that which determined on the part of the Church a more plentiful concession of spiritual Indulgences to the faithful, was the solemnity of the Consecration or Dedication of churches. These are the material temples of the living God, His dwelling-places on earth, at the same time images of the heavenly Jerusalem, and emblems of the faithful soul. Therefore, in the dedication of these holy buildings, what the Church considered most was the consecration of the soul to her heavenly Spouse, who has shed all His most precious blood to cleanse and sanctify her, "and espouse her to Himself for ever, in justice and judgment and in mercy and in commiserations."<sup>2</sup> It was, then, just and proper that, on such a recurrence, the Church should open to the faithful the treasury of her Indulgences, whence they might be made fitting vessels for the Holy Spirit, that the spiritual temples might be none the less beautiful than the material.

Indeed, this was no novelty. Such a custom could be traced back to a more remote antiquity. The learned Pope Benedict XIV., in his Constitution "*Jam inde a primis annis*," tells us that, in the

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. lxxxiv. n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Osee ii. 19.

archives of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, there exists a Bull of Gregory IX., in which a mention is made of an Indulgence of one year and forty days, which the Sovereign Pontiff Sixtus III. (432-440) granted when, after he had rebuilt this Basilica, he consecrated it anew.<sup>1</sup>

This Basilica seems to have been particularly favoured by the largesses of the Sovereign Pontiffs. For, the same Indulgence of one year and forty days is recorded to have been granted by Clement III. (1187-1191) when, on the anniversary of the consecration of the church, he laid on the High Altar the consecrated stone. A similar Indulgence was granted by Honorius III. (1216-1227), from the anniversary of the consecration (5th August) until the octave of the Assumption (22nd August); which Indulgence was confirmed by Gregory IX. (1227-1241). All this is recorded on an inscription of comparatively recent date, which is to be found near the east end on the right aisle.

QVISQVIS SACROSANCTAM LIBERIANAM BASILICAM INGRE  
DERIS TE MONITVM OPORTET XISTVM III. EO DIE QVO SA  
GRAM AEDEM CONSECRAVIT VNIVS ANNI ET XL DIERVM  
CLEMENTEM III. CVM ANNIVERSARIA DIE CONSECRATIONIS  
EIVSDEM BASILICAE LAPIDEM SACRO CHRISMATE DELIBVTVM  
ARAE MAXIMAE IMPOSUIT ITEM VNIVS ANNI ET XL DIERVM  
INDVLGENTIAM OMNIBVS QVI EODEM DIE BASILICAM DE  
VOTE VISITAUERINT CONCESSISSE EAMDEMQVE INDVLGEN  
TIAM HONORIVM III. AB IPSO FESTO CONSECRATIONIS VS

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<sup>1</sup> On the inscription recording the consecration of this church by Sixtus III., see *Origini del Culto alla Addolorata* per Fr. Agostino Morini, O. S. M. Roma, 1893, p. 64.

QVE AD OCTAVAM ASSVMPTIONIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS PARITER  
 CONCESSISSE EIVSMODI VNIVS ITIDEM ANNI ET XL DIERV  
 INDVLGENTIAM AB EODEM FESTO CONSECRATIONIS VSQVE  
 AD EAMDEM ASSVMPTAE IN COELVM DEIPARAE OCTAVAM GRE  
 GORIVS IX. SACRAM BASILICAM VISITANTIBVS CONCESSIT OMNES  
 QVE SVpra MEMORATAS INDVLGENTIAS CONFIRMAVIT QVO  
 RVM OMNIVM TESTATIVS MONVMENTVM IN HVIVS BASILICAE TABV  
 LARIO ASSERVATVR IPSIVS GREGORII IX. AVTOGRAPHVM DIPLOMA  
 DAT. LATERANI X KAL. IVLII PONTIFICATVS ANNO XIII.

In the ninth century, this custom of granting Indulgences on occasion of the Dedication of Churches extended far and wide. St. Leo III., when he visited the Emperor Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle (803), dedicated in his palace the Church of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, enriching it with many Indulgences. He likewise dedicated a church to the Blessed Virgin both at Tongres and at Visetum, besides many others, and endowed them all with copious Indulgences, which made St. Ludgerus in his letter to St. Swibert say that this Pontiff granted many Indulgences through France and Germany.

This Pope granted likewise Indulgences for the celebration of religious festivals. Thus, when he betook himself to the town of Werdam, and solemnly canonised St. Swibert, he granted to the church of the monastery special Indulgences in favour of all the faithful who would devoutly celebrate this saint's feast, and assist on that day at the divine services.<sup>1</sup>

Less than half a century later (847), the Sovereign Pontiff Sergius II., on restoring the ancient church of SS. Silvester and Martin in Rome, dedicated therein

<sup>1</sup> See Bar. Ann., t. ix. an. 803, n. 2 and 4.

a sacred altar, and collected from the cemetery of Priscilla, on the Via Salaria, many martyrs' relics, which he placed in this altar, granting an annual Indulgence of three years and three quarantines to all those who would devoutly visit this church, *as one may read on a marble slab placed on the right hand side*, says Baronius.<sup>1</sup> But Mabillon expresses some doubts about the exactness of this statement.<sup>2</sup>

Similar instances do we find in Mabillon of the Sovereign Pontiffs Benedict IX., Alexander II., Urban II., Callistus II., and Innocent III., each of whom granted Indulgences on the occasion of the dedication of some church to such as would pay a visit to this same church, *provided*—these are the words used, as a rule, in the formula of concession—*they confess their sins to a priest, and amend their lives*.<sup>3</sup>

An inscription still exists in the Church of St. John Before the Latin Gate in Rome, bearing that Pope Celestine III. granted forty days' Indulgence for every year in occasion of the dedication of this church. The inscription is typical of the style of that time, and exhibits the genuine idea of Indulgences.

✠ ANN . DÑIO INCĀR . M.C.LXXXX EC  
 LESIA . SĀI . IOHIS . ANTE . PORTĀ . LATINĀ . DEDICA  
 TA . E . AD . HONORĒ DEI ⁊ BEATI IOHIS EVAN . P  
 MAN . DÑI CELESTINI . III . PP . PSENTIB . FERE . OM  
 NIB ; CARD . TĀ . EPIS . Q VĀ ETALIIS CARD . MĒN . MA  
 DIO . DIE X . FESTIVIT . SCORꝰ GORD ET EPIMACHI  
 E ENIM IBI REMISSIO . VERE PENITENTIB ; XL . DIERꝰ .  
 DE INIVNCTA SIBI PENĀ . SINGVLIS ANNIS .

<sup>1</sup> Ann., t. x. a. 847, n. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Præf. in Sæc. v. Bened., n. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., n. 109.



✠ In the year of our Lord's Incarnation, *M.C.LXXXX.*, the Church of St. John, before the Latin Gate, was dedicated in honour of God and of the blessed John the Evangelist, by the hands of our Lord Celestine III., Pope, almost all the Cardinals being present, both those who were bishops and the others, on the tenth day of the month of May, being the Feast of Saints Gordianus and Epimachus. For, to those who are truly penitent, a remission is granted of forty days every year, out of the penance that has been enjoined unto them.

The formula of concession, used by Urban III., is likewise worthy of notice. In the first year of his Pontificate (1185), he consecrated the Church of Parthenon of our Lady of Epeia, in the diocese of Verona. "Of our authority, we grant to all those who will come to this place on the anniversary of this dedication, and it is our will that the aforesaid Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops grant of our own apostolic authority for the same purpose, to all those who are truly penitent and who have confessed their sins, one year and forty days of the penance which has been assigned to them for grievous sins, and a fourth part of that appointed for venial sins. Likewise we remit to them their breaches of vows, so that they may go back to the monastic life; we also forgive their parents the excesses they have committed, unless they be enormous. To the penitents who are in quarantine we remit a year out of every three, and forty-seven days. To those who are performing their solemn penance we grant that they may resume their shoes."<sup>1</sup> By these words we can trace to some extent

<sup>1</sup> Du Cange, *Gloss. med. et inf. Lat.*, at the word "Indulgentia."

what was the penitential discipline of the Church at that time, and what the exercises annexed thereto.

13. The Bishops, too, with the tacit consent of the Holy See, granted with open hands Indulgences on the occasion of their consecrating or dedicating some church or other building destined for sacred purposes. We find an illustration both of the exercise of this power and of the manner of dispensing the treasures of the Church, in the wording of the Indulgence which Pontius, Bishop of Arles, granted when, in the year 1000, he dedicated the Church of Mount Major.

In the words of the concession it is said that, if “any one has been forbidden from entering into the Church, or receiving the communion of the Body of Christ, or the kiss of peace; likewise, if prohibition has been made to him to cut or shave his hair, to wear linen garments, to raise spiritual children from the sacred font, to taste anything except bread and water on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday”—all these were signs of public penance at that time—“such an one, should he repair to the said church on the day of the dedication thereof, or help towards the building of it, on the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and ours, let him be absolved from a third part of his greater sins, and be permitted to enter all the churches for a whole year, to communicate and receive peace, to have his hair cut and his beard shaved, to wear linen garments and raise god-sons from the sacred font.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Præf. ad Sæc. v. Bened.*, n. 108. Rothomagi, 1732.

In the old Temple Church in London, there is still an ancient Latin inscription engraved over the principal door. It states how, on the tenth day of February 1185, the church was consecrated in honour of the Blessed Mary by the Lord Heraclius, *who to those yearly visiting it hath indulged sixty days of the penalty enjoined them.*

✠ ANNO . AB . INCARNATIONE . DOMINI . M.C.LX.XX.V.  
 DEDICATA . HEC . ECCLESIA . IN . HONORE . BEATE . MARIE .  
 A . DÑO . ERACLIO . DEI . GRĀ . SCĒ . RESVRECTIONIS .  
 ECCLESIE . PATRIARCHA . IIII . IDVS . FEBRVARI . Q̄ . EAM .  
 ANNATIM . PETENTIBVS . DE . TIVNTA . Š . PENITĒTIA .  
 LX . DIES . INDVLSIT.<sup>1</sup>

All these were but partial Indulgences. However, Bishops granted at times plenary Indulgences also. The first instance of such a concession recorded in history is about 1159, when the little town of Calatrava, in Castille, being attacked by the Arabs, John, Archbishop of Toledo, granted to all those who would go and help the besieged, the remission of all their sins.<sup>2</sup>

Bishops granted Indulgences also for the dedication of such buildings as were intended to serve for pious purposes and for objects of a beneficial character. Thus, in the year 1381, we find the Archbishop of Magdeburg granting eighty days' Indulgence on occasion of the dedication he made of the new hospital of Halle, with its church and cemetery.

<sup>1</sup> As regards the solemnity which accompanied in England the dedication of churches, see John Lingard's "The Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church," chap. vii. n. vi. Edit. Fithian. Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. lxx. n. 32.

14. But the Bishops themselves knew that what authority they had, was dependent on the superior power of him whom Christ had bidden feed, not the *lambs* only, but the *sheep* also—that is to say, of the Sovereign Pontiff. And so it is that we find them applying to Rome in the more difficult cases, and humbly asking for others and even for themselves the Indulgence of past transgressions.

As early as the end of the ninth century, the Bishops of Bavaria applied to Pope John IX. (898–900), asking him to absolve, out of the fulness of his authority, the soul of the Emperor Arnoulf, who had recently died.<sup>1</sup>

Remigius, the Bishop of Lincoln, had sent to the Apostolic See a priest guilty of murder, that he might obtain from the Pope the dispensation for saying Mass. The Pope, who was then St. Gregory VII., was at Terracina when the culprit arrived. On the fourth day of the nones of December 1073, he wrote back to the Bishop, absolutely rejecting his petition, and strictly forbidding the guilty priest to be again admitted to celebrate the sacred mysteries. And as the Bishop, in his letter to the same Pontiff, had asked for the absolution of his own sins, which we commonly call Indulgence, Pope Gregory granted it in these terms: “Relying on the authority of the princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, whose office we, though unworthily, do hold, we have thought it proper to send to thee the absolution of thy sins, even

<sup>1</sup> See Mabillon, *Præf. ad Sæc. v. Bened.*, n. 108.

as thou hast asked us; provided thou insist in the practice of good works, weeping over thy past transgressions as much as thou shalt be able, and thus thou do present the dwelling of thy body as a clean temple to God."<sup>1</sup>

We see by this how anxious the Church was at all times to inculcate, whilst granting Indulgences, the necessity for the faithful to better their lives, to reform their manners, to do penance for their past sins, and so to live, that their lives might ever be an uninterrupted hymn of praise to the Almighty.

But it would be far too long and beyond the purpose and the limits of this book to enumerate all the Indulgences which the Popes, or the Bishops, have granted since that time. Such a study, if it were possible, would only have for its result to show us how the Church unfolded, expanded, developed the exercise of this power which she firmly believed to be in her possession.

She had indeed, in the beginning, the same power of granting Indulgences even as now, but it was only by degrees and on certain occasions that she manifested the exercise of this power, just as it is only with the lapse of time that a child passes from infancy to manhood, and from childish deeds to those more manly of a riper age. And if the Church believed that she possessed this power, who is there that, mindful of the promise of her Divine Spouse to be with her "all days, even to the consummation

<sup>1</sup> Bar., Ann. Ecc., t. xi. an. 1073, n. 71.



of the world,"<sup>1</sup> will accuse her of wilful error or deliberate deception?

15. Beside the facts of the Crusades, of the solemn dedication of churches, &c., another reason which led the Church to a fuller exercise of that power, is to be found in the growing disuse of the canonical penances.

As we have seen, until the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these penances had been in full force, or, at least, the Church had repeatedly in her councils inveighed against the carelessness of men, and commanded that they should be re-established. In some places mitigations had been introduced in order to invite the faithful the more willingly to submit to them.

But it was of no avail. In fact, whether it was that the times were altered or that human constitutions had grown weaker, or rather that charity had waxed cold, the movement for the abrogation of ancient canons went on, and the time soon came, from the twelfth century upwards, when they became a dead letter, a relic of ancient days—rather a study for lovers of archæology than a practical rule of action.

This was a grief to the Church, as we see from the Canons of the Councils of that time. She protested as long as she could. She used the weapons of her censures.

But her children defied excommunications and sighted interdicts. The fierce partisans of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

Emperors of Germany, the effeminate courtiers of France and England, could not easily be brought to submit to a regular course of ten years' fasting on bread and water for having broken their plighted faith, or to twenty years' standing outside the door of the church, weeping, confessing their sins, and imploring the prayers of those that went in and out in order to atone for a homicide.

But the Church is a tender mother. She knows how to pity the weakness of her children. Unlike the Pharisees, "she does not bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men's shoulders,"<sup>1</sup> but her yoke, like that of her Founder, "is sweet and her burden light."<sup>2</sup> She knows how to adapt her discipline to the requirements of the times and to the weakness of men. After all, the canonical penances were but her own institution. She had established them for the good of her children. She could mitigate them, or even dispense with them, when the occasion required it. And so she did.

As early as 912, when the Normans, with their chief Rollon, or Robert of Normandy, embraced the Catholic faith, and the Archbishop of Rheims, Hervé, consulted John X. what Penitential code he should in future follow with them, the Pope had answered: "You must not treat them according to the rigour of the canons, lest this burden should appear to them insupportable."<sup>3</sup> And so, now that these penances

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Fleury, H. E., l. liv. n. 51.

were no more of any avail to her children, nay, exposed them to daily disobedience, the Church could connive at and tolerate their going into disuse.

But, at the same time, she could not deprive men of the benefit of satisfying for their sins in another way. She would have been cruel, had she dispensed her children from doing penance in this life, exposing them thereby to a far greater penance hereafter. She had in her hands the treasury of Christ's satisfactions. She held the deposit of what her saints and martyrs had superabundantly gained by their merits, and she possessed the power to distribute them. This she did. And whereas before a heavier penance of long years was required, now she contented herself with a pilgrimage to a shrine, with an expedition against the infidels, with the giving of an alms, and filling up what was wanting with the gold and silver of her coffers, she paid to the Justice of God the debt due for the transgressions of her children.

Like her Divine Master, she combined two things, which, at first sight, seem irreconcilable; justice and mercy: "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed."<sup>1</sup>

16. However, the disuse of canonical penances was not a universal fact. On the one hand, the examples of previous centuries were yet too fresh to be easily forgotten. On the other, faith was still alive in men's hearts,—a quick, generous faith, which

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

prompted them to great penances. There were still among men some who, if they committed foul deeds, were not ashamed to confess them, and if they rebelled against the Church, were not slow to submit to most humiliating and painful exercises. The examples of public penance were not indeed now so numerous as before, but they were perhaps more striking.

We have a famous one in Henry II., King of England (1154-1189). He had had a share in the death of St. Thomas of Canterbury. He had not expressly willed or directly sought it; but the animosity which he had unjustly manifested against that holy man, had led others to commit that foul deed. He felt that he must wash his sin in the waters of penance.

On the 22nd of May 1272, whilst at Avranches with the Pope's Legates, he promised to send instantly to Jerusalem, for the defence of the Christians, two hundred knights, who would serve there for a year at his expense. This form of succour to the Holy Places was then of most common occurrence, and the Church accepted it in lieu of a personal expedition, when the person himself was lawfully prevented. Besides, the King promised that he would take the cross for three years, and would make the journey in person, unless the Roman Pontiff dispensed him.

This was not all. "Moreover," said he, "I, and my elder son the King, we swear that we will receive and hold from our Lord Pope Alexander and his catholic successors the Kingdom of England; and we

and our successors, unto the end of time, will not consider ourselves as Kings of England, except as long as they hold us to be catholic kings.”<sup>1</sup> Besides this, the Legates enjoined upon the King, fasts, alms, and other penal works, to which he gladly submitted. He was then led of his own accord outside the door of the church, where he received absolution; after which he was led back again into the church.

Likewise, of the four murderers of St. Thomas we read that, after some years, stung by the remorse of their conscience, they went to Alexander, asking him to impose upon them a congruous penance. The Pope ordered them to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where three of them died as penitents.

Yet, the repentant king had not yet atoned for all his debts with divine justice. A time came for him of sorrow and affliction. His son rebelled against him, and he saw himself encompassed by foes on all parts. He again turned to Alexander for counsel and for help. “The kingdom of England is held of your jurisdiction; and what regards the ties of feudal right, I am only beholden to you. Let England experience what the Roman Pontiff can do; and as he does not make use of material weapons, let him keep the patrimony of St. Peter with a spiritual sword.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Præterea ego, et major filius meus rex, juramus quod a Domino Alexandro Papa et ejus Catholicis successoribus recipimus et tenebimus regnum Angliæ; et nos et successores nostri in perpetuum non reputabimus nos Angliæ reges, donec ipsi nos Catholicos reges tenuerint.”—*Bar.*, a. 1172, n. 5.

<sup>2</sup> “Vestræ jurisdictionis est regnum Angliæ, et quantum ad feudatarii



The following year, as the rebellion continued, he had recourse to the saint whom he had so much persecuted during his lifetime, and made a pilgrimage to his tomb.

He rode the whole night from Southampton to Canterbury, taking nothing but bread and water. At daybreak, on perceiving from afar the towers of the metropolitan church, he alighted, put on sack-cloth next his skin, and walked bare-footed towards the town on a stony and muddy road.

When he arrived, he went into the church and prostrated himself at St. Thomas' tomb. Afterwards he betook himself to the chapter-room, where the monks of the monastery, and some bishops and abbots—eighty-four in all—were gathered. The royal penitent, kneeling, confessed his offence before all; and, at his formal request, each of the bystanders, with a knotted rope, applied three or five stripes on the monarch's shoulders.

After that, he returned to the subterranean church, and remained there prostrate the whole day and the whole night in prayer, without taking the least food.

However, he soon experienced the reward of his penance. Three weeks after, the war ceased in the whole of England, and the rebels submitted to the King.

*juris obligationem, vobis dumtaxat obnoxius teneor et obstringor. Experiatur Anglia quid possit Romanus Pontifex, et quia materialibus armis non utitur, patrimonium Beati Petri spirituali gladio tueatur.*"—*Bar.*, a. 1173, n. 10, et inter *Epist. Petri Bles.*, 136.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *PILGRIMAGES AND THE GREAT "JOBEL"*

*"In the year of the Jubilee all shall return to their possessions."*—  
LEV. xxv. 13.

#### FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Continual growth of the Church—Pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to Rome—Some famous Shrines in England—The "Portiuncula"—Indulgenced prayers—What the Saints thought of Indulgences—The great "Jobel" of 1300—Great crowds in Rome—Giotto and Dante—Original meaning of the word "Jubilee"—The Jubilee of Clement VI.—The Jubilee gained without going to Rome—Subsequent Jubilees—Further dispensations from going to Rome—The *Porta Sancta*—Its mystic signification.

1. THE time that elapsed between the epoch we have just examined, until the day when the Augustinian Friar kindled the first sparks that were to give rise to a mighty conflagration, especially in the northern provinces of Europe, may justly be called a time of transition in the practice of Indulgences.

Indeed this epoch, which comprehends the latter part of the middle ages, and the beginning of modern times, considered in its universal aspect, appears to us as the forerunner of what took place in subsequent ages. Then, the generous efforts of chivalrous knights preluded to the great and orderly battles of later years; the discovery of printing foretold the coming of an age, when distant nations would unite

in closer intercourse of thought and relation. Then also, by seeing the Catholic Church send forth missionaries to Asia, men could anticipate a time, when her sons would cross the seas and penetrate into the wildest countries, and would leave no spot unvisited, where there was a rational soul to save.

Great events must have small beginnings, and this law holds good in the physical as well as in the social order, in the department of grace no less than in the reign of nature. So that the Body of Christ also, which is His Church, "by joints and bands, being supplied with nourishment and compacted, may grow unto the increase of God."<sup>1</sup>

We have already seen the application of this law in the matter we have assumed to examine, that of Indulgences, and we have witnessed how the Church, through successive ages, granted—different, indeed, in form, yet the same in substance—new and more increased largesses to her children, out of that great treasury which is made up of the merits of Christ and of His saints, and which has been confided to her care. It was only the growing of the grain of mustard-seed transforming itself into a stately tree.

We shall now assist at a further development of this doctrine, and we shall witness a larger application of it through the centuries that followed the first Crusades, until the Catholic world was startled by the impudent denial of what, for fifteen centuries, had been held as an article of faith.

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 19.

2. Notwithstanding the oft-repeated regrets and protestations of the pastors of the Church, the canonical penances finally fell away, so that we scarcely find any traces of them in the twelfth century, and we see them wholly disappear in that which followed. Whether this was an evil or not, it does not come within the scope of our work to explain. One thing is certain, viz., that the deep regret and mournful lamentations of the Jansenists, of whose sentiments the Gallican historian Fleury <sup>1</sup> made himself the interpreter, contain much more of exaggeration and zealotry, than of prudent solicitude and sober earnest.

Instead, then, of performing canonical penances, the faithful, with the consent, sometimes tacit, often explicit, of the prelates of the Church, undertook long and painful pilgrimages. Holy Land was one great goal. In these days we wonder, when we hear that some hundreds of pilgrims travel thither with all the facilities of modern conveyance. But, then, pilgrimages were performed for the most part on foot, often through trackless countries, by thousands of fervent palmers. Thus in 1054, three thousand pilgrims started on one day from Picardy for the Holy Land, and later on seven thousand from the banks of the Rhine.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of time, so many Indulgences were

<sup>1</sup> Discours sur l'Hist. Eccl. depuis l'année DC. jusqu'à l'année MCX., n. xvi.

Blanc, Hist. de l'Eglise, t. ii. p. 288. Paris, 1886.

annexed to this pilgrimage by successive Pontiffs, that it became impossible to have an exact list of them, and a prohibition was issued, under pain of excommunication, to publish them.

Next in veneration for the faithful, was the pilgrimage to Rome, *Ad limina Apostolorum*, that is to say, to the tomb of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and to the feet of the successor of the Prince of the Apostles. We have numerous examples of such pilgrimages in the history of the Church. One of the most remarkable is that recorded by ancient chroniclers, and quoted by the present Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in a learned paper, which he read in 1891 at the Catholic Truth Society's Conference.<sup>1</sup>

In 1030 the great Cnut or Canute, King of Denmark, England, Norway, and of part of Sweden, went to Rome, "to pray," as he himself says in a letter he wrote from thence to his people, "to pray for the remission of his sins, for the safety of his kingdom, and for the nations that were subject to his sceptre."

At first, the devout pilgrims could learn only from the mouth of the Pontiff, what Indulgence the latter was pleased to grant them; but afterwards, special Indulgences were bestowed in a permanent manner upon any one visiting Rome. In this respect we have, as early as the year 1116, the example of

<sup>1</sup> It is to be found among the Conference Papers published in that year.



Pope Paschal II.<sup>1</sup> granting fixed Indulgences for such visits.

3. Each country had its own particular pilgrimage or pilgrimages with Indulgences annexed thereunto, sometimes by the Bishops, sometimes by the Pope himself. Thus Spain had its St. James of Compostella; France its St. Martin of Tours; England its St. Thomas of Canterbury, the circumstances of which pilgrimage inspired the gay tales of Chaucer, and which, if its history were adequately told, would bear ample witness, at once to St. Thomas' mighty power of intercession, and to the esteem which our forefathers entertained for the Holy Pardons, which they were in hopes to obtain at this hallowed shrine.

Besides Canterbury, England had a famous shrine to St. Peter at Peterborough. As early as 664, when the great Abbey Church was completed, Wolthere, King of Mercia, obtained from Pope Vitalianus, that such as could not repair to Rome might fulfil their vow at this shrine. Pope Agatho, in a rescript to King Ethelred, confirmed this grant, establishing, moreover, that the palmer "shall receive the same absolution from Christ and St. Peter, from the abbots and monks, that he would receive, if he went to Rome." And history tells us that streams of pilgrims poured into Peterborough, eager to obtain through St. Peter's intercession the absolution, that is to say, the Indulgence of their sins. The illustrious names

<sup>1</sup> Apud Baron, *hoc an.*, n. 6.

of Edward III., Queen Philippa, Queen Isabella, the Black Prince, are mixed with the myriads of the peasants who flocked to this holy shrine.<sup>1</sup>

The tomb of St. Thomas, Bishop of Hereford, in this country, became also in the fourteenth century a centre of devotion, a source of Indulgences. In a letter written from Avignon on the 12th of the Calends of May 1320, John XXII., who had canonised that holy Bishop, granted boons of Indulgences (*præmia Indulgentiarum*) to such as would visit his shrine every year on the day of his feast, and on the following eight days.<sup>2</sup>

4. Among the celebrated shrines of that epoch, that of Portiuncula deserves special mention.

Portiuncula is a place about two miles from Assisi. It was so called originally, because it formed a small portion of the goods possessed by the Benedictine monks of Monte Subasio.

In that spot stood a church called St. Mary of the Angels, which in great part had fallen into ruins, and was altogether abandoned. In the beginning of his conversion, St. Francis betook himself to this church and resolved to restore it. The spot pleased him so much, that he established therein his sojourn, and began to lay the foundations of his Order.

One day (1221) as he was praying, he asked our Lord, through the mediation of His Mother, to grant

<sup>1</sup> See a letter of Fr. W. H. Bernard Saunders, "An Ancient National Devotion to St. Peter," published by the *Catholic Times*, June 23, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Raynaldus, A.D. 1320, n. 46.

a plenary Indulgence to all those who, being contrite, and having confessed their sins, would visit this church. Jesus Christ granted this prayer, on condition that Francis would obtain from the Sovereign Pontiff the confirmation of the Indulgence.

The Holy Patriarch, in compliance with the wish of Heaven, repaired to Honorius III., who then governed the Church, and received from him the desired confirmation. Later (1223), the same Pope, in accordance with a further wish of Jesus Christ, manifested to St. Francis in a second vision, fixed the day available for the gaining of this Indulgence to the 2nd of August, which was the anniversary of the dedication of the sanctuary, and further decreed that this Indulgence could be gained every year and for ever, on that same day. The first publication of this great Pardon was made on August 1st of that same year. St. Francis pronounced a most eloquent discourse, in which he extolled the great worth of Indulgences; after which the Bishops of Assisi, Perugia, Todi, Spoleto, Foligno, Nocera and Gubbio, there present, published the Indulgence.<sup>1</sup>

This Indulgence was, in subsequent ages, granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to all the churches of the Franciscan Order; and more recently a similar Indulgence was by special concession granted to the churches of some other Religious Orders, such as the

<sup>1</sup> Ben. xiv. De Syn. dioeces. l. xiii. c. 18, nn. 4, 5. Also *Disquisitio de Ind. Portiunculæ* in his "*Opuscula Miscellanea*."

Dominicans, the Minims, the Servites, the Carmelites, on their most solemn festival respectively.

This is the famous Indulgence called *Portiuncula*, or the great Pardon; and it illustrates, according to Cardinal Bellarmine,<sup>1</sup> as confirmed by our Blessed Lord Himself, three important dogmas of the Church: the truthfulness of Indulgences, the power of the Popes in this matter, and the necessity of auricular confession. We might add also, that it reminds us of the existence of Purgatory, for that Indulgence can be gained for the holy souls *toties quoties*, that is to say, as often as the visit to the church is made, and the prescribed prayers are recited.

Now, to come back to our subject, what was, we will ask, the pilgrims' intention in resorting to these holy places, in visiting these sacred shrines? Was it simply to receive the sacramental absolution of their sins? If so, there was no need of their undertaking such long and painful journeys, of exposing themselves to the inclemency of the weather, or to the many possible accidents which must have accompanied travelling in those days. For the sacramental absolution is as validly conferred in one place as in another, by a simple priest as by a bishop, or by the Pope himself.

Their intention, then, must have been to seek for that which they could not find at home, viz., the relaxation from the debt of temporal punishment

<sup>1</sup> De Indulg., l. ii. c. xx.

which remained to be paid to the justice of God after their sins had been remitted, and for which the superabundant merits of Christ and of His saints, applied to them in consideration of their devotion and of the sanctity of the place to which they resorted, were copious compensation.

Thus, pilgrimages are illustrative of the doctrine and practice of Indulgences, especially in the latter part of the Middle Ages. But, though characteristic of that time, they were not the only exercises of piety to which Indulgences were attached. Besides the building of churches and hospitals, of which we have already spoken, new Crusades or wars against the infidels, especially those who occupied the Holy Land, were occasions for the granting of new Indulgences, partial or plenary. We will merely mention the Indulgences granted for new Crusades by Eugene III. (1145), Gregory VIII. (1187), Clement III. (1188).

5. About this time, also, we find Indulgences granted for the recital of some vocal prayer. Thus we read in the author of the "*Fasciculus Temporum*" that in the year 1268 Clement IV., at the request of St. Louis, King of France, granted an Indulgence of three years to the faithful, every time they should read or pronounce these words: "May the sweet name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that of His most glorious Mother, the Virgin Mary, be blessed for ever and ever. Amen. May the Virgin Mary bless us with her Holy Child! Amen."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spondanus, A.D. 1268, n. xiv.



6. But, if we wish to make a proper estimate of what the sense of the Church was concerning Indulgences in this epoch, we must view, besides the decrees of her ruling pastors, also the sentiment of the faithful who compose the mystic Body of Christ. These, too, the Spirit of God pervades and informs, with His mighty action and sweet inspiration. Christ's prayer for Peter, that "his faith should not fail,"<sup>1</sup> was made for him, not only inasmuch as he was to be His own Vicar upon earth, but also inasmuch as he, too, being a son of the Church, represented all human generations that, until the end of time, were to be borne in the mystical bark to the harbour of salvation.

In other words, as Henry VIII. argued, if the Roman Pontiffs did sin when they granted Indulgences, the whole congregation of the faithful was certainly not free from sin, as for such a long time they received Indulgences with a unanimous consent. "For me," added the King, "I would rather yield to the sentiment and to the pious custom of the saints, than to Luther alone, who, with so great fury, contemns the whole Church."<sup>2</sup>

Now, we do not find that any one, then, inveighed against the doctrine of Indulgences, or against this

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> "Certe Indulgentias, si Pontifices peccavere qui concesserunt, immunis a peccato non erat tota congregatio fidelium qui eas tamdiu tanto consensu susceperunt, quorum ego iudicio, et observatæ sanctorum consuetudini non dubito potius acquiescendum, quam Lutheri soli, qui totam Ecclesiam tam furiose contemnit."—*Assertio*, &c. At the article "De Indulgentiis."

manner of granting them. The revolutionary clamours of Wickliffe and the Hussites had not yet disturbed the peace of the Church; the cynical derisions of Erasmus, who combined in himself the greatness of a genius with the unsteadiness of a stage-player, had not yet scandalised the ears of the faithful; the apostasy of Luther had not yet opened the way to the denial of every truth, divine and human. All and each, according to their capacity, in their eagerness to avail themselves of those spiritual riches, either flocked in person to the rescue of the Holy Places, or by offerings concurred towards the building of churches, or resorted to the shrines of the saints, or gave themselves up as a ransom for the rescue of captives, or crossed unknown seas to preach the Gospel of Christ to heathen nations and open to them the gates of heaven.

If we turn, now, to the example of the servants of God who distinguished themselves by special holiness, we shall find them full of a holy avidity to gain these Indulgences. St. Clare of Assisi, whose sweet figure will remain for ever the type of dove-like innocence joined to most austere penance, asked and obtained, on the point of death, from Pope Innocent III., a plenary Indulgence for all the sins of her life.

Moreover if, from the cloister, we pass on to the palaces of kings, we shall find St. Louis of France addressing, in his testament, to his son Philip, the heir of his kingdom, this fatherly counsel: "Be

careful in procuring for thyself the Indulgences of our holy Mother the Church."<sup>1</sup>

The holy king had himself practised what he preached. His faithful companion, to whom we owe so many details of his life, Joinville, tells us that when he was in Palestine, he would often carry hods of bricks and mortar on his own shoulders, for the repairing of the citadels of Joppa and Sidon, in order that he also might gain the holy Pardons attached to that work.<sup>2</sup> Such value did he set upon Indulgences.

7. In this period, a fact happened, recorded by all ecclesiastical historians, which illustrates in a most striking manner, both the tradition of the Church with regard to Indulgences, and what an active part belongs to the faithful in the keeping of the deposit of faith.

Towards the end of 1299, a rumour was spread in Rome that in the following year, 1300, all those Romans who should visit the Basilica of St. Peter, could gain a plenary Indulgence of all their sins, and that every hundredth year the same privilege could be obtained.

Pope Boniface VIII., who was then sitting in the chair of St. Peter, having heard of this rumour, had the archives of the Church carefully searched ; but nothing could be found that authorised such a practice.

The first day of January had almost passed in the

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldus, *Contin. Baron.*, A.D. 1270, n. xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, A.D. 1251, n. liii.

usual way, when, towards evening, a prodigious concourse of people began to flock to St. Peter's, and lasted until midnight, as if the Indulgence was to end on that day. However, this spontaneous concourse went on for almost two months, having reached its climax on the Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany, which that year fell on the 17th of January, on which day it was customary to show the *Veronica*,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, the Sacred Face of our Blessed Lord.

The Sovereign Pontiff, from the palace of Lateran, where he then resided, was watching carefully, nay, encouraging this movement of devotion.

There lived then an old man, who said that he was one hundred and seven years old. The Pope called him; and, in the presence of diverse witnesses, the old man said that he remembered well the previous hundredth year; that his father, a countryman, had come to Rome to gain the Indulgence, and had remained as long as the food which he had taken

<sup>1</sup> The Veronica is the veil with which a holy woman is said to have wiped the face of Jesus when, on His way to Calvary, He sunk under the weight of the Cross. The divine features were then miraculously impressed upon that cloth, which remained as a lasting picture of our Divine Saviour's face. I am indebted to Mr. Kegan Paul for the following note:—"The name by which the compassionate woman is known, seems to have arisen from this memorable action. It means 'Victorious,' and is composed of two Greek words which signify 'I bring victory.' Some, however, hold that the name arises from the Latin words *Vera Icon*, or true likeness, but the words ceasing to be correctly understood, were mispronounced; *Vera Icon* became in popular speech *Veronica*, or even *Berenice*; the name was transferred from the relic to the pious woman who possessed it, till the story which grew up round Saint Veronica confused the memory of the real woman and her real life. This is, however, less congruent to the rules of language, and the manner in which names are usually formed."

with him had lasted him. He had warned his son not to fail to go to Rome on the following hundredth year, if he still were alive, a thing which he did not think would be likely.

Some of the bystanders asked the old man what had been the reason of his coming to Rome, and he answered that he had done so, because the faithful could gain one hundred years' Indulgence every day in that year. The same opinion about the Indulgence to be gained in Rome was prevalent in France, as two men over a hundred years old from the diocese of Beauvais bore witness. Many Italians affirmed the same.

After this information, the Pope, with the advice of the Cardinals, issued a Bull in which he confirmed and renewed all the Indulgences which, according to the faithful relation of the old men, had been granted to those who visited the Church of the Prince of the Apostles. But, to foster the devotion of the people to the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and to promote the frequentation of their churches, the Pope, out of the fulness of his apostolic authority, granted to those who, being truly contrite and having confessed their sins, would devoutly visit the Basilicas dedicated to those two saints, a full and entire remission of their sins, to be gained during that same year and every hundredth year to follow.

In the same Bull, the Pope established the number of visits to be made by the inhabitants of Rome and by the pilgrims, and ended by saying that the merit



of the faithful would be so much the greater, and the Indulgence so much the more efficacious, as the visits would be more numerous and performed with greater devotion.

8. It would be difficult to say with what exultation this Bull was met on the part of the people. The Romans set the example; and, without distinction of rank, of sex, of age, performed the appointed visits in the designated churches. From England, from Germany, Spain, and other nations, pilgrims came flocking to Rome—not robust men only, but also old men and sick carried on litters. Among others, an old man from Savoy was seen in Rome over one hundred years of age, carried by his own sons, and who remembered the ceremonies of the previous centenary.

All these circumstances are related by Cardinal James Stefaneschi, who then resided in Rome, and was a member of the Pope's council. The Florentine historian John Villani, an eye-witness, confirms these assertions, and adds that the greatest wonder was, that there were continually in Rome during the whole year not less than two hundred thousand pilgrims, besides the Roman people and those who were on the journey. "Nevertheless," says he, "both men and horses were sufficiently provided with food during all that time."<sup>1</sup> Raynaldus speaks of a monumental inscription then existing at Florence, and attesting that in 1300 men came even from Tartary to Rome, in order to gain the Jubilee Indulgence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. lxxxix, n. 79.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 1300, n. 1.

To this Jubilee is attributed the foundation of a house for English pilgrims in Rome. John Shepherd and his wife Alice, seeing there was no such house in Rome, settled there, and devoted their substance to the maintenance of the poor pilgrims who came from their own country. "This small beginning grew into sufficient importance for it to become a royal charity; the kings of England became its patron, and named its rector, often a person of high consideration."<sup>1</sup>

9. Among the pilgrims whom the Jubilee of Boniface VIII. brought to Rome, two of the most illustrious were Giotto and Dante. They, too, resorted to the Eternal City, moved by their ardent faith and unfailing hope, trusting to gain for their souls the copious remission.

Their gigantic minds were deeply impressed by the great event. They left, each in his own way, to posterity an everlasting monument of the sentiments which the Jubilee had awakened in their hearts. Giotto painted on the walls of the great Loggia of the Lateran Basilica a fresco representing the Pope in the act of granting the Jubilee. The painting was judged by Giotto's admirers to be one of his best works.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately time destroyed it, and only a small fragment of it now remains. It has been transferred from its primitive place to the second

<sup>1</sup> Wiseman, "The Four Last Popes." Leo XII. c. iv. p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Armellini, "Le Chiese di Roma dal sec. IV. al xix.," Roma, 1891, p. 98.

pier in the first aisle on the right of the said church, and represents the portrait of Boniface standing between two cardinals, in the act of announcing the Jubilee from the Loggia of that church.

As regards the immortal author of the "Divina Commedia," Balbo<sup>1</sup> holds it to be a probable opinion that the idea of the sacred poem first came to Dante's mind, precisely from the sight of the Jubilee. However, it was undoubtedly with reference to this great event, that he wrote in his eighteenth canto<sup>2</sup> of "Hell:"—

"E'en thus the Romans, when the year returns  
Of Jubilee, with better speed to rid  
The thronging multitudes, their means devise  
For such as pass the bridge; that on one side  
All front toward the castle, and approach  
Saint Peter's fane, on th' other towards the mount."

And again, in the second canto<sup>3</sup> of "Purgatory:"—

"He (Casella) answer'd straight :  
' No outrage hath been done to me, if he  
Who, when and whom he chooses takes, me oft  
This passage hath denied, since of just will  
His will he makes. These three months past indeed,  
He, whoso chose to enter, with free leave  
Hath taken; whence I wand'ring by the shore  
Where Tiber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd kind  
Admittance.'"

Most probably also, it was in remembrance of what he had seen during the Jubilee in Rome, that he wrote in the thirty-first canto of "Paradise:"<sup>4</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Vita, i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Verses 29 and foll., Cary's translation.

<sup>3</sup> Verses 90 and foll.

<sup>4</sup> Verses 93 and foll.

"Like a wight,  
 Who haply from Croatia wends to see  
 Our Veronica, and the while 'tis shown,  
 Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,  
 And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith  
 Unto himself in thought: 'And didst thou look  
 E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God,  
 And was this semblance thine?'"

10. It is to be noted that in his Bull Pope Boniface VIII. makes no mention of the word Jubilee. Indeed, authors are not of one mind with regard to the origin of this word. Some derive it from the Hebrew word *jobel*, יָבֵל, which means "ram," because it was customary to announce it with the horn of a ram, or at least with an instrument bearing the shape thereof. St. Jerome<sup>1</sup> makes this word come from *jobal*, belonging likewise to the Hebrew language, and which means *remission*. Josephus<sup>2</sup> gives it the signification of *liberty*, whilst Calmet, in his "Dictionary of the Bible," prefers the derivation of it from the word הָבִיל, *hobil*,<sup>3</sup> to *bring back* or to *call back*, because then goods and possessions among the Hebrews went back to their first owner.

But all these different derivations agree in this, that they present us with diverse aspects of one and the same institution, registered and described in Leviticus :—

"Thou shalt also number to thee seven weeks of years, that is to say, seven times seven, which to—

<sup>1</sup> In cap. iii. Isai.

<sup>2</sup> In the third Book of "Jewish Antiquities."

<sup>3</sup> In Hiphil from יָבֵל, *jabal*.

gether make forty-nine years. And thou shalt sound the trumpet in the seventh month, the tenth day of the month, in the time of the expiation in all your land. And thou shalt sanctify the fiftieth year, and shalt proclaim remission to all the inhabitants of thy land : for it is the year of Jubilee. Every man shall return to his possession, and every one shall go back to his former family. Because it is the Jubilee and the fiftieth year. You shall not sow, nor reap the things that grow in the field of their own accord, neither shall you gather the first-fruits of the vines, because of the sanctification of the Jubilee ; but as they grow, you shall presently eat them. In the year of the Jubilee, all shall return to their possessions.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was the Hebrew Jubilee, and such were its regulations. The Church that succeeded the Synagogue in the mission of benefiting man by leading him back to the Creator, adopted, making it her own, this wholesome institution. She also, therefore, had her Jubilee ; but, instead of restoring man to the possession of his temporal goods, she offered him a propitious occasion of recovering the friendship of God, and returning, as it were, to a state of baptismal innocence, by the relaxation of all the penalty due to his sins.

The Jewish Jubilee restored man to his social and domestic position, by calling him back to his own property and family ; the Christian Jubilee made him a fellow-citizen of the saints and of the house-

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xxv. from v. 8 to v. 13.



hold of God, worthy, if overtaken by death in that state, to be admitted into the company of the blessed, to enjoy at once and for ever the ravishing vision of the Divine Essence.

The origin of the Christian Jubilee is lost in the haze of time. What we have related of the event which took place in Rome under Boniface VIII., shows that an analogous institution must have existed before the beginning of the fourteenth century, and that probably it had been handed down by tradition already for several centuries. The concession of Alexander III., who ascended the chair of Peter in 1159, of a Jubilee to the Church of Compostella under the form of that of Rome, confirms this statement, and Boniface VIII. himself, three years before he granted that solemn Jubilee, had already declared in his Constitution "Frequenti" that, from ancient times, the Roman Pontiffs, his predecessors, had bestowed Indulgences of diverse kinds, and he added that he recognised and increased them.<sup>1</sup> But we do not know upon what documents some authors have grounded the assertion that the Christian Jubilee is to be traced to Apostolic times.<sup>2</sup>

11. Boniface VIII., with his Bull of the 22nd February 1300, had decreed that the Plenary Indulgence which he had granted should be repeated every hundredth year following. But Clement VI., on his accession to the See of St. Peter, received at

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldus, A.D. 1297, n. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Felic. Auruccius Capitonus, O.S.M., de Jubilæo, 1576.

Avignon, where he was residing, a deputation from the Roman people asking him, among other things, that he should reduce to fifty years the Indulgence of the hundredth year which Boniface had previously granted, because few were those who could live long enough to see it. The Pope willingly granted their request, and published to that effect, on the 27th of January 1343, the famous Bull "*Unigenitus*," inserted afterwards in the *Corpus Juris*.<sup>1</sup>

This Bull dogmatically recognises the existence of an infinite treasury of merits in the Church, intrusted to the dispensation of St. Peter and of his successors. It is the most weighty document which has ever come from the Apostolic See on the matter of Indulgences. It repeats in substance the conditions which Boniface VIII. had already laid down for the gaining of this Indulgence, adding the Church of Lateran to those of St. Peter and St. Paul for the prescribed visit. Later on, Cardinal Cajetan, when conferring with Luther at Augsburg, referred to this Bull; but Luther would not acknowledge it as dogmatical.

The same Pontiff thought it fit, at the approach of the Holy Year, to renew the Bull which he had sent, seven years before, in order to awaken in the minds of the faithful the memory thereof, and the better to prepare them for the coming great Indulgence, which he, for the first, styles a *Jubilee*.<sup>2</sup>

Historians tell us wonders of the eagerness with which the faithful celebrated this Jubilee. It was

<sup>1</sup> Extrav. Comm., lib. v. tit. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Bellarm. de Ind., l. i. c. 1.

opened on Christmas Day, 1349, which day was then reckoned as the beginning of the year. The cold was intense, but nothing could keep back the pilgrims, neither the frost, nor the snow, nor the water. The roads, though made impracticable by the inclemency of the weather, were day and night frequented by men and women of every condition.

Inns and other houses on the wayside were not sufficient to give shelter to the men and horses. The Germans and Hungarians, more inured to the cold weather, stood in the open air, and spent the night gathered together in large numbers around immense fires. The innkeepers could not attend to all their guests, nor even had they time to receive their dues. They often were compelled to leave the money on the table, but none of the travellers would ever touch it until the master of the house came.

Through the streets no clamours were heard, no quarrels witnessed. The pilgrims sympathised with one another, helped one another, consoled one another with patience and charity. Robbers tried to attack the pilgrims; but these knew how to defend themselves, and the people of the country kept watch on the roads.

It was impossible to keep an exact number of the pilgrims, but according to the reckoning made by the Roman people, on Christmas Day and the following feasts, as well as during Lent, there were continually in Rome as many as 1,120,000, and on the Feast of the Ascension and on Whitsunday

upwards of 800,000. In summer, their numbers began to diminish on account of the excessive heat and the labour of the harvest ; but they were never less than 200,000. The streets of Rome were so filled with people that, whether on foot or on horseback, it was necessary to follow the crowd. The pilgrims visited the three churches daily, some oftener, some less often, according to their devotion.

Henry, a monk of Rebdor, tells us that, on Passion Sunday, the holy Veronica was shown to the people, and that such was the crowd in St. Peter's Church, that many were suffocated under his very eyes. Matthew Villani adds, that, to console the pilgrims, the Holy Face of our Lord was shown every Sunday and feast day, and that, on one occasion, as many as twelve persons were trodden underfoot.

At the end of the year, the concourse of pilgrims began to increase, and became as great as at the beginning. It was then, that grand lords and noble dames, and other conspicuous persons, came flocking to Rome from the different parts of Italy and from other countries. On the last days, all those that were in Rome were dispensed from the time that was wanting to them to perform all their stations, in order that all might gain the Indulgence.

12. Raynaldus narrates that many princes, among whom were the Kings of Aragon, of Portugal, and Cyprus, and the Duke of Austria, not having been able to go to Rome for the Jubilee, asked the Pope's leave to gain it in another manner. The Pope con-

sulted the Cardinals; and finally answered Hugh, King of Cyprus, that this Indulgence, having been granted not only for the salvation of the soul, but also in honour of the saints, he did not consent that it should be granted to any one who did not visit the aforesaid churches.

However, the Pope allowed John, the Archbishop of Brindisi, and Internuncio in Sicily, to grant the Jubilee Indulgence to thirty persons, on condition that, if they had effectually made up their minds to go to Rome, and had been prevented from doing so through lawful impediments, they should give the sum which they might have spent on the journey, for the spreading of the faith and for other good works, according to the Pope's disposition.<sup>1</sup>

13. A little later, that is, in the year 1389, we find Urban VI. reducing to thirty-three years, in honour of the thirty-three years of our Blessed Lord's life on earth, the time which should pass between one Jubilee and the other. He commanded that the next Jubilee should be held in the following year, 1390. This Jubilee was likewise attended by a great concourse of people. But the great schism, which had subtracted from the obedience of the Pontiff of Rome so many provinces of the West of Europe, prevented the number of pilgrims being as great as at the preceding Jubilee. In fact, the French, and other peoples of the obedience of Avignon, would not recognise the reduction made

<sup>1</sup> See Fleury and the authority he cites, lib. xcv. n. 51.



by Clement VI. for every fifty years; much less did they recognise the change made by Urban VI., whom they did not acknowledge as Pope. They kept it, therefore, in the year 1400, and repaired to Rome in large numbers.

But the enmity which existed then between the King of France, Charles VI., who followed the obedience of Avignon, and the Pope of Rome, Boniface IX., caused the King to fear lest this pilgrimage, whilst it would enrich, as he thought, the Roman States, would impoverish his own subjects and decimate their numbers, thus making it easy for his adversaries to make an inroad in his own kingdom. Consequently, he forbade any one thenceforth to undertake the journey, and commanded, under severe penalties, that those who were on the way should instantly return.

Later, Nicholas V. chose to return to the decree of Clement VI., which authorised every fifty years only the celebration of the Jubilee. In consequence, on Christmas Eve, 1449, he opened the Holy Year. This is one of the most renowned in history. Pilgrims came flocking to Rome in such large numbers, that several of them were suffocated in the crowd. This was for the Pope a cause of great affliction. He ordered the victims to be buried with honour, and caused some houses to be pulled down to enlarge the passage for the pilgrims in the streets.<sup>1</sup>

Then, Rome was given to behold one of those spec-

<sup>1</sup> Rohrbacher, H. U., lib. xxxiii. § iv.

tacles with which she, of all cities, is so often favoured. Among the pilgrims whom the desire of gaining the holy Pardon at the intercession of the martyrs' had attracted to the Eternal City, was the Spanish Franciscan friar St. Diego of Seville. At first, he was lost among the three thousand and eight hundred Religious, whom the Jubilee had gathered at the *Ara Cœli*, for he was but a lay brother. But the splendour of his virtues soon began to break through the crowds, for many of the pilgrims had fallen ill at the monastery, and to Diego was committed the care of the sick.

Forgetful of his own needs, he spent and over-spent himself for his brethren. There, he was to be seen at every hour of the day and night, running from one bed to another, bringing everywhere help and assistance, tempered by that look of radiant kindness which breathed forth from his countenance, and those soothing words which came out of an overflowing heart.

Miracles were necessary to feed all that multitude, for there was a great dearth in Rome that year. But for his dear sick he could work miracles: the bread and wine were multiplied in his hands. He did not shrink from those stricken with the most loathsome and repulsive diseases. He had deadened nature in himself to such a point, that he could without reluctance kiss even their very sores. God was pleased with him, for we read that he would anoint the sick with the oil that burned before the image

of the Mother of God, and making the sign of the Cross, he would restore them to perfect health. Truly, his presence was an additional Jubilee to the city of Rome.

The spiritual good effects of this Jubilee had been so conspicuous, as to make it desirable that the time which was to divide one Jubilee from another should yet be shortened. On the other hand, the latest reduction, owing to the general shortness of human life, made it impossible for many to avail themselves of these spiritual riches. Consequently, Paul II., by a Bull of the 19th of April 1470, restricted to twenty-five years the time that should elapse between one Jubilee and another.

The next Jubilee, then, was to be in 1475, but this Pope did not live to open it. His successor, Sixtus IV., confirmed Paul II.'s Constitution, and moreover decreed that all the Indulgences granted to every church in the world should be suspended during the Jubilee year. The holy festival was opened, as the Pope had decreed, on Christmas Eve, 1474. But owing to the war in which France, England, Spain, Hungary, and Portugal were engaged, the number of pilgrims was not as great as it had been on previous occasions.

14. At the end of the fourteenth century, dispensations from going to Rome in order to gain the Jubilee began to be more frequently granted. In the year 1391, Boniface IX. granted to the inhabitants of the cities of Munich and Cologne a plenary

Indulgence, to be gained under the same form as at Rome, for a whole year, on condition that the faithful should visit certain churches and should give alms.

The following year he extended the same privilege to the city of Magdeburg; and later, to those of Meissen and Prague. He also granted the Jubilee to the monks of Canterbury, who kept it every fifty years. We read that the people flocked from all parts of England to this venerated shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, in order to avail themselves of those spiritual grants and discharge their debts with God.

Alexander VI. extended to all the faithful outside Rome the Jubilee of 1500, on condition that each one should contribute a fixed alms towards covering the expenses of the war against the Turks.

Such, then, is the origin, the progress, the development of the Christian Jubilee. At the imitation of the Church, temporal princes began to grant to their subjects, on the recurrence of some special anniversary, as that of their birth, a jubilee solemnised by a law of amnesty, or by some special temporal concession. Thus we read of Edward III., King of England, that when he came to the age of fifty, which was in 1362, he caused his birthday to be kept after the manner of a Jubilee. He ordered prisoners to be released on that occasion; he pardoned all offences except treason; he made new and beneficial laws, and granted many privileges to his people.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. cx. n. 7.

15. There is, in connection with the Jubilee, a splendid ceremony called the opening and closing of the *Porta Sancta*. The object of this ceremony is to impress the faithful with the fact that the gates of heaven are thrown open, through the privilege of the Jubilee Indulgence, to the repentant sinner.

On Christmas Eve a procession takes place, composed of the Pope, carried in *sedia gestatoria*, of the cardinals, of the bishops and prelates of the Pontifical Court, of the clergy both secular and regular, and in general of all those who have a place in the Papal chapel.

The procession starts from the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, goes down through the *Scala Regia* and the Piazza of St. Peter, and enters the atrium of the Basilica, of which all the doors have been previously shut.

Among these doors there is one, the last on the right-hand side, which at other times is walled up. When the Pope reaches it, he strikes it three times with a silver hammer, singing these words: *Aperite mihi portas justitiæ*. "Open ye to me the gates of justice."<sup>1</sup> The Cardinal Penitentiary strikes it also twice.

At these strokes, the wall is immediately removed, having previously been cut round from the jambs and lintel of the doorway. Then the Vatican Penitentiaries wash the threshold thereof, and the Pope, with a cross in his right hand and a lighted candle

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxvii. 19.



in his left, first passes through; then the Sacred College follow him in white vestments, and all those who take part in the procession.

The same ceremony is subsequently practised in the three other patriarchal churches of Rome, of which the doors must previously have been shut. At St. Paul's the ceremony is performed by the Cardinal-Dean; at St. John Lateran's and at St. Mary Major's, by the respective Cardinals-archpriests of these Basilicas.

When the holy year is at its close, the Pope himself announces the walling up of this door a little before Christmas Eve, in the same way in which he had announced the opening thereof on Ascension Day the previous year.

He celebrates a reverse ceremony at St. Peter's, and the same Cardinals at the three other Basilicas. A procession similar to the first takes place. Then the Pope, assisted by the Cardinal Major-Penitentiary, begins by spreading three times some mortar on the threshold of the *Porta Sancta* with a silver trowel, and places thereon three stones together with some medals. After which, the masons proceed to wall up the door entirely, and it remains so until the following Jubilee-year.

16. "This ceremony," writes a modern author, "has a mysterious and sublime meaning. The *Porta Sancta* is on the right, and the baptismal font on the left of the church. These signify the two entrances which lead man to heaven. Baptism is the first.

Man can pass through it but once. Penance is the other; and, thanks to the Divine mercy, it is never irrevocably closed up. It is on Christmas Day that the *Porta Sancta* is open—a day truly of Indulgence and forgiveness. To the Pontiff, who represents our Saviour, is reserved the prerogative of opening it, and the glory of being the first to cross its threshold. A hammer is used instead of keys, because a door which is opened with keys remains, and may yet be closed. But, opened with a hammer, it is demolished, and every one can enter freely and fearlessly.”<sup>1</sup>

What we have said applies to the regular Jubilees, which happen four times in a century; but the Sovereign Pontiffs are also wont to grant extraordinary Jubilees in special circumstances; as, for instance, at the occasion of their exaltation to the supreme Pontificate, or in some urgent need of Christendom.

<sup>1</sup> Le Catéch. en Ex. iii<sup>e</sup> partie, chap. viii. n. 1808, 4<sup>e</sup> édit. Paris.

## CHAPTER IX

### USE AND ABUSE

*"For what, if some of them have not believed? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid. But God is true, and every man is a liar."*—ROM. iii. 3, 4.

#### A RETROSPECT

Relation of Indulgences to Catholic Dogma—To Papal Supremacy—To the Real Presence—To the Immaculate Conception—To Purgatory—Abuses of Indulgences—A threefold charge—Indulgences granted for alms-deeds—They were no cause of deception—Compensation—Apocryphal Indulgences—Condemned by the Church—She reproves the errors of Preachers—The ambition of the "Quæstores"—She abolishes their office—Authenticity of Indulgences.

I. THE works of God are not without a wise purpose. When He produces any being or founds any institution, He does not mean it to be simply something to look at, a food to man's curiosity. His works have an end, a sublime end, and this end is to further man's sanctification in view to God's own glory. Now, every man is called to be a member of His Church. All the works of God, then, are directed to the good of His Church, to "the building up of the body of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Indulgences are a divine institution, and so must have an object. We shall therefore examine in this

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 12.

chapter what moral influence they exercised upon the Church in the Middle Ages, that is to say, from the time this practice began to develop itself into a notable part of the Christian discipline, down to the epoch of the Reformation.

But, like every other divine institution confided to man's care and ministration, this presents itself to us under a twofold aspect: the divine and the human. The first is marked out, as all things coming from God, by a principle of life, of grace, of perfection; the second, by a principle of imperfection, of destruction, of death; for man can hardly handle anything which God has made without impairing its beauty, enervating its vigour, and sully-ing its spotlessness. In other words, we shall speak in this chapter of the moral good effects brought about in the Church by the practice of Indulgences, and of the abuses and faults to which it occasionally gave rise, through the ignorance, weakness, or even malice of man.

To begin by the first aspect, there was perhaps no practice which, in the Middle Ages, shed a more propitious and abundant light on Christian dogma than that of Indulgences. For, the notion of Indulgences follows, as has already been said, from the doctrine of the malice of sin and its consequences, of imputableness of merits, of good works, and of the Communion of Saints. These dogmas are so linked together that the denial of one must bring about the denial of the others: if one stone is

shaken, the whole edifice crumbles into dust. We shall see, in the next chapter, how Luther's sense of consistency brought him insensibly to overthrow one by one these articles of our faith, having once planted his battering-ram against the doctrine of Indulgences.

As far as the epoch we are now examining is concerned, it seems as if God had so disposed that Indulgences should be a means of asserting in His Church such of the principal dogmas of faith, as, in future ages, were to meet with marked opposition on the part of His enemies.

2. This was the time, when the powers of hell aimed their more deadly blows at the corner-stone of the Church ; when the centre of Catholic unity was made a butt for the darts of confusion and disorder ; when a factious band endeavoured to dethrone Peter and place in his stead anarchy deified. Wickliffe had pronounced the Pope to be Antichrist ; Luther was to take up the slanderous reproach ; while the harbingers of Jansenism, retrenched behind a show of hypocritical distinctions, were to make the Pontiff of Rome the tool and plaything of a council, as if Christ's Vicar on earth could be the slave of man.

Among the means employed by God to keep the minds of men in the belief of this fundamental truth, and to prepare them for the reception of the Florentine definition of the Pope's supremacy, and the subsequent Vatican declaration of his infallibility, Indulgences, we venture to assert, did not hold the



least nor last place. For *he*, indeed, must be the supreme head of the Church who alone can bestow, out of its treasury, on the faithful, as much riches as he wishes ; and *he* must be the keeper of the deposit of the faith who prevents, on the part of those under him, any injudicious distribution of these heavenly treasures.

The Popes, then, were careful, when the occasion presented itself, to vindicate against any unjust usurper the fulness of the power of granting Pardons. For, the Sovereign Pontiff alone has inherited, independently from any human authority, and without earthly restriction, the keys of the kingdom of heaven—that is, the power of binding and loosing ; whilst the bishop's power is dependent on that of the Pope. When, therefore, any bishop misused such a power, or presumed to exercise it without the Pope's consent, the Roman Pontiffs, the keepers of divine tradition, thought it their duty to raise their voice and claim what was their own.

This was the case when, in 1423, Henry, Archbishop of Canterbury, with the consent of his clergy, moved either by the hope of increasing the patrimony of his church, or by a preposterous zeal of fomenting devotion among his people, granted the Jubilee Indulgence to those who would, at stated times, visit his church. It was an encroachment on the Sovereign Pontiff's authority, who alone had hitherto granted such an Indulgence. And so, as soon as the news came to the ears of Martin V., he deputed two delegates—

James, Bishop of Trieste, and Master Simon of Teremo—to inquire into the matter and inform him of the case. When he learned that it was really so, he wrote a letter in which he reproved the action of the Archbishop, saying, that “some men, full of presumption against the Apostolic See and the authority of the Roman Pontiff, to whom alone such a power has been granted by God, have endeavoured to erect a false ark of salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Next to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, the Blessed Eucharist is the most powerful link which binds Christians together into one and the same mystical body. The Pope’s word makes them one, in the external profession of the same faith, in the reception of the same Sacraments, in the practice of the same virtues. The Blessed Eucharist makes them one, by the same substantial blood that runs through the veins of its members. The Pope is the head, to precede, to rule, and to guide; the Eucharist is the heart, to infuse throughout the body life, health, and vigour. Without the Pope, each man differs from another in faith, because he has only his private judgment to guide him; without the Blessed Eucharist, each man has but his private personality to fall back upon; he is an isolated member, and one man is independent of another, like the trees in a nursery-ground. This is why we call this Sacrament by the fitting name of *Synaxis*, Communion.

Towards the middle of the eleventh century an

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldus, A.D. 1423, n. 21.

attempt had been made by Berengarius, to deny the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Though he relapsed into his errors as many times as he had retracted them, yet he made no proselytes. His denial, however, had the practical result of inducing the learned Lanfranc to compose his beautiful tract on the Eucharist. But in later centuries, Wyckliffe, Luther, Zuinglius, and Calvin were to turn, with greater success, their weapons against this consoling dogma, and endeavour to strike at the very heart of the Church.

The practice of Indulgences, in this epoch, appears to us to have been a means prepared by God to strengthen the belief of the faithful in the Real Presence, and forewarn them against the bold denials of heretics.

The institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1264 by Urban IV. is a well-known fact. In the Bull which he sent to all the prelates, and in which he explained the motives which prompted him to institute such a festival in the Church, the Pope, in order to induce the faithful to a devout celebration thereof, granted, as St. Thomas says in the Office of the Blessed Sacrament which he composed at the Pontiff's request, to those who would devoutly attend the services of the Church on that day, spiritual gifts from the treasury of the Church—that is, Indulgences—instead of the ordinary daily distributions.

“You shall exhort,” says Urban IV., “the faithful to prepare themselves for this festival with a sincere

confession, with almsgivings and prayers, together with other exercises of piety, in order that they may be able to receive worthily on that day the Holy Communion; and in order to induce them the more to do so, we grant one hundred days' Indulgence to those who will assist at the Matins of the day, and the same to those who will assist at Mass and at the first and second Vespers. For the assistance at Prime, Terce, Sext, None, and Compline, forty days' Indulgence; and one hundred days' Indulgence for the whole office every day of the Octave; all this to the effect of lessening the penances which may have been imposed upon them."<sup>1</sup> These last words are illustrative of the true notion of Indulgences and of their relation with canonical and sacramental penances.

This was a protest against the denial of Berengarius, and a provision against future attacks.

From this time forward, we see the Church opening her treasury to induce thereby the faithful to pay homage to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and thus acknowledge His Real Presence therein. And not to simple acts of private adoration only, but to a display of that outward homage and reverence which is due to God, would the Church entice her children by a promise of those heavenly wages. It was with that intention that Urban VI. (1389) granted a hundred days' Indulgence to those who would accompany the Blessed Sacrament, when carried to the

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. lxxxv. n. 27.

sick, from the church to the house, and when brought back to the church.

4. Together with the faith in the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the belief in our Blessed Mother's Immaculate Conception, was to be, on the part of the propagators of new-fangled doctrines, an object of the basest calumnies and most virulent attacks. And yet the Immaculate Conception is closely connected with the Incarnation. Our Lord took His human flesh from the Blessed Virgin Mary, for St. Paul says that He was "made of a woman."<sup>1</sup> Hence she is in truth and in very deed His mother.

Now, had Mary been conceived in original sin, even though she had been purified after her conception, it would always be true to say that the flesh of the Son of God had been taken out of a once corrupted and defiled source, and that He, who came to cleanse men of their sins, had not been altogether without some, at least, distant connection with sin. And if, as the Book of Proverbs<sup>2</sup> tells us, "the glory of children is their fathers," what glory, what praise, can we imagine would have accrued to Jesus from the sinfulness of His mother?

Wherefore, it has ever been the sense of the Church that Mary was conceived immaculate; and this belief, handed down by one century to another, received in late years a solemn dogmatic sanction from the infallible guide of the faith.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xvii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Bull "Ineffabilis," 8th December 1854.



But the Reformers, as they had opposed the Son, so must they oppose the Mother, for the two go together. In olden days, Nestorius, by denying the unity of person in Christ, had been brought to deny the divine maternity. In more modern times, those who distorted the quickening power of Christ's grace and sacraments, could not well acknowledge in the Mother of God that boundless power of intercession which the Church recognises in her, and thought they could reduce it to nought in the minds of men, if Mary were brought down to the level of an ordinary woman; and so they attacked the sinlessness of her conception, that they might the better remove the sinlessness of her after life.

But Luther and Calvin had had some forerunners. In the fifteenth century especially, some preachers who called themselves Catholic had thought of giving glory to God, by saying that it was a heresy or a mortal sin to believe or to teach that the Mother of God had, in her conception, been preserved from original sin, and that none could recite the office of that feast or listen to the sermons which were then preached without committing sin.

These propositions called forth from the Popes words of formal disapproval and the extension in the Universal Church of the feast already existing in her honour. Indulgences were the solemn sanction of this institution. Sixtus IV. was the Pontiff who thus vindicated the honour due to the Mother of God. He annexed (1476) to the celebration of this feast

the same Indulgences which Urban IV. and Martin V. had granted for the celebration of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>1</sup>

5. The work of the Reformation was a work of division, of separation, of isolation. It was an effort to sever nations from Peter, the centre of Christian life; to rob the faithful of the bread of angels, to cast off the intercession of Mary and the Saints, thus leaving man alone to purchase, as best he could, the heavenly kingdom by a barren faith in the one Mediator.

One thing remained: to cut off from the communion of the living the souls that are suffering in the flames of Purgatory, to isolate them, and leave them to themselves to endure their torments, without its being possible for man on earth to release them, or assuage in some way their excruciating pains.

But in this respect also, Luther had had a forerunner. In the year 1479, Peter de Osma, Professor of Theology at the University of Salamanca, whom his efforts to diminish, nay, to annihilate the power of the Keys has rendered sadly famous, but who, fortunately, died without having made any followers, presumed to deny that the Roman Pontiff can remit the pain of Purgatory, or release in any way the souls that suffer in this place of torments.

This was equivalent to a flat denial of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. But it ultimately resulted in attacking the power and efficacy of

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. cxiv. n. 83.

Indulgences, as if thereby the faithful could not release by way of suffrage the suffering souls of Purgatory. Sixtus IV. solemnly condemned this error in his Constitution "Declarant," establishing as a point of faith the contrary doctrine, and so Indulgences became also a safeguard against the error of the opponents of Purgatory.

6. However, the study we have made on the tradition of the Church concerning Indulgences in the Middle Ages would be incomplete, and we might incur the reproach of partiality, were we to be silent on the question of the abuses which, in course of time, crept into this holy institution.

We have already seen in the third and fourth centuries how much the fathers of the Church, especially St. Cyprian, inveighed against the abuse which some made of the martyrs' commendation, and of the letters they had received from them. Now, the form under which Indulgences were granted had varied, but the nature of man remained ever the same—of man, who misuses the very best of God's institutions.

This sad side of our subject has been so magnified by Anti-Catholic writers, that it alone seems to have engrossed their attention, and they seem to have lost sight of the tree, for the few spoiled fruits that have fallen from it. Their invectives, against this point of Catholic doctrine, are but a repetition of the clamours of the Hussites (1411), and the echo of the calumnies which Ruchard of Upper Westphalia uttered

against Indulgences. With an overweening confidence in his assertions, he had styled Indulgences as "nothing else than pious frauds and beguilings of Christians," adding that "those are insane who go to Rome for the sake of gaining pardons, which they might as well find at home, if they were contrite."<sup>1</sup> The Sovereign Pontiff, Sixtus IV., condemned this proposition (1479).

Does it not seem as if the authors of the Thirty-nine Articles had this proposition before their eyes when they wrote<sup>2</sup> that the "Romish doctrine concerning pardons is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded on no warranty of Scripture?"

7. This accusation, well understood, implies a threefold charge: first, that Indulgences are not of divine institution, but rather an unwarranted invention of the Church; secondly, that the object which moved the Church to this forgery was simply to deceive the faithful; and thirdly, that they are merely a futile device, productive of no real fruit.

If, as we have seen, the power of Indulgences is an appendage of the power of the Keys; if we have an instance of a grant of pardons in our Saviour's behaviour with regard to the adulterous woman, and in St. Paul's dealing with the incestuous Corinthian; if, from the very foundation of the Church, we see this power exercised by the Sovereign Pontiff and the Bishops, it is clearly evident that the first charge brought against the divine institution of

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldus, A.D. 1479, n. 33.

<sup>2</sup> In the 22nd Article.

Indulgences falls to the ground, and that we are entitled to number them among those practices, the origin of which is to be ascribed to our Divine Saviour's will and action.

If it be so, even though abuses may have crept into the dispensation of Indulgences, it is manifestly absurd to say that the wish of deceiving the faithful was the moving principle which determined the Church to invent this practice. Is it good logic, from the faults which, in course of time, beyond and contrary to, the founder's intentions, crept into the practice of Indulgences, to condemn as deceitful the doctrine itself? Is the institution of the profession of arms to be ascribed to a desire of ill-treating a sister nation, because oppressors have sometimes turned it to such unworthy purpose?

As to the third charge, we have already seen, and we hope to see yet further, how the doctrine and practice of pardons have been fruitful of most beneficial results—in the department of art, by prompting the erection of those magnificent cathedrals, peaceful hospitals, and retired monasteries, which will ever remain a wonder to future generations—in the range of social interests, by bringing together men of so different countries and of so contrary habits to more perfect civilisation and common sympathy—but above all, in the order of faith, by impressing the deep truths of religion and promoting the spirit of prayer and the practice of good works.

8. As it sounds, then, the accusation has been



sufficiently answered. But more is suggested than expressed in the charge. For, even such as admit the divine institution of Indulgences, and the beneficial effects to which they have given rise, will persistently hold that, for the greater part, the Church granted Indulgences only for the sake of enriching herself, or that, for a like purpose, she countenanced the publication of false Indulgences. In these cases, at least, it would be true to say that they were merely pious frauds and deceptions. Let us see how much truth there is in this new aspect of the accusation.

It having been proved that the Church has the power of granting Indulgences for any good work that is performed by the faithful, it must be acknowledged that she can grant them also for deeds of almsgiving.<sup>1</sup> For almsgiving is one of the penitential works so often inculcated by Holy Scripture, and, together with prayer and fasting, constitutes the summary of the Christian penal code. But then, these almsdeeds, for which a prelate grants an Indulgence, must have in his intention a holy destination. Otherwise they will not contribute to the glory of God, and so the second condition required for the validity of an Indulgence—the good motive—will be absent, and the Indulgence certainly null.

The Sovereign Pontiffs, then, could annex the grant of an Indulgence to the giving of an alms for a holy

<sup>1</sup> S. Thomas, Supplem. quæst. xxv. art. iii.

purpose; and so they did. And these Indulgences became for them a means of carrying on grand enterprises, as the Crusades, the erection of monasteries and hospitals, and the building of churches, as that of St. Peter's in Rome. Indirectly also these Indulgences became a source of enrichment; for instance, to the sanctuaries, to which they were annexed; nay, often to the surrounding neighbourhood also. Villani says that on occasion of the Indulgence granted by Boniface VIII., the Church was greatly enriched, and the Romans had no difficulty in selling off all their merchandise.

Now, it is not unlikely that, just because Indulgences became thus a source of riches to the Church, so many attacks were directed against them. Men's covetousness grew into jealousy, and jealousy into slander. But had the slanderers had a share in the profits occasioned by these Indulgences, would they have been so hasty to calumniate them? However, the philanthropic instincts of these men ought to have made them acknowledge the advantages which accrued to humanity, from the fact that Indulgences were a means of bringing together men of most different manners and distant climes, in epochs when hardly any means of communication existed.

9. But to examine impartially whatever abuse was possible in the matter, we shall suppose a threefold case.

First, it may be that the object for which the In-

dulgence was granted was really a holy one, and the monies thence derived by the collectors were really spent for that purpose—say, for carrying on a war against infidels, or for building a church or an hospital. In this case, there was no abuse whatever. The Indulgence was gained, and it became the means of furthering the glory of God, of promoting works of penance and of benefiting humanity.

Or, the money originally destined for a holy purpose was afterwards, through the malice of a private individual, diverted from its primary end and made to enrich his own private coffers. Thus six years before the rise of Luther, an Indulgence was preached in Saxony to raise money for a war against the Turks, and the whole sum was divided between the Emperor and the Elector, except two hundred florins given by the latter to the Church of Wittenberg.<sup>1</sup> In this case also, who can doubt that the faithful gained the Indulgence? For, this is gained as soon as the conditions on the part of the penitent are fulfilled; and the subsequent abuse of the effect of his good work cannot undo that which has been perfectly done.

Thirdly, it may be that the prelate was mistaken as to the nature of the work for which the Indulgence was granted; for instance, that he would grant an Indulgence to such as would take up arms for the overthrow of one whom he thought to be an unjust adversary, but was in reality in the full possession of his right. Or else, to present the case in its worst

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, lib. viii. c. 3.

aspect, we shall imagine a prelate, having in one hand the crosier and in the other the sword, granting an Indulgence to such as would fight against his own enemies, knowing them, however, to be in the full possession of their rights; or promulgating an Indulgence simply for the sake of filling up his coffers with gold, or distributing it to his well-wishers.

In the last century, and in the early part of the present, when the Catholic Church was still, in the eyes of the English public, "the Scarlet Woman," her Pontiff "Antichrist," and her discipline "abomination of desolation," it was the fashion to traduce the practice of Indulgences, as the meanest of traffics on the part of Popes and Bishops, in order to get money from the people. We hardly know what to wonder at most, the overweening confidence of the writers in dealing out such forgeries, or the simplicity of the public in accepting them as genuine truths.

The current teaching of Protestant authors was then that "in the beginning of the twelfth century the Bishops, whenever they wanted a supply of money for their private pleasures or the exigencies of the Church, recurred to the scandalous traffic of Indulgences; and when the Roman Pontiffs saw that immense treasures were thus accumulated by the inferior rulers of the Church, they thought proper to limit the powers of the Bishops in remitting the penalties imposed upon transgressors, and assumed it, almost entirely, as a profitable traffic to them-

selves.”<sup>1</sup> These gratuitous charges should rather rouse compassion than excite anger. It was necessary to invent fabulous romances on events of other times and other countries, in order to divert the attention of the public from the recent spoliations of the churches and monasteries perpetrated at home, and which were still vividly present in the minds of all.

10. However, even granting this to have happened, yet we hold that Indulgences, granted under such conditions, cannot be said to have been frauds and deceptions of the faithful, in the sense in which those Protestant writers understood it.

That the faithful, though they performed with proper dispositions the work enjoined, gained no Indulgence, is evident, as there was not, on the part of the prelate, the just motive required by the very nature of an Indulgence, and inculcated in the Councils both of Lateran and Trent. Yet, even in this case, whatever deception there may have been with regard to the Indulgence, was fully compensated by a still greater good. The greater good was the work itself, which necessitated the state of grace in the faithful, and determined an act of special virtue, meritorious of eternal life, which would not have been made, had not the hope of gaining the Indulgence acted as a spur.

God's goodness is not made void by man's malice, neither does the infidelity or wickedness of the minister weaken the value of grace and of good

<sup>1</sup> Rees's Cyclopædia, at the word "Indulgence."



works. There is no human or divine institution whatever which man cannot abuse; but this does not impair the goodness of such an institution, or cause God to withdraw His gifts, because man squanders them away. Not all those who miraculously receive sight, hearing, and speech make use of these gifts to glorify God. He is sometimes scorned by those very eyes which His divine power has re-kindled, and blasphemed by those very tongues which He has loosened. And yet He does not withdraw those gifts.

11. It cannot be denied that, in course of time, many apocryphal Indulgences were put forth and published with the appearance of authenticity. Such publications were the offspring either of ignorance or of indiscreet zeal, or, again, of a vain desire of emerging above others. Thus, with the people of Ancona there ran a fabulous story that Alexander III. had granted them as many Indulgences as both hands joined together could contain grains of sea-sand.<sup>1</sup>

But how did the Church behave with regard to the publication of such Indulgences? Did she ever countenance them? Indeed, she rather energetically set herself, at all times, to the rooting up of the same. She severely condemned such absurd fables.

A decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics,<sup>2</sup> of the 7th of March 1678,

<sup>1</sup> Baron., A.D. 1177, n. 49.

<sup>2</sup> See Richard et Giraud's Dict. Univ. des Sciences Eccl., at the word "Indulgences."

enumerates in detail and rejects a large number of such unauthentic Indulgences, published without the sanction of the Church. We shall extract a few of them.

There was an Indulgence, supposed to have been granted by Pope Eugenius III., at the request of St. Bernard, in honour of the wound of our Saviour's shoulder. Another by Innocent III. to the Confraternity and Order of Redemption. Another by John XXII. to those who would kiss the measure of the sole of the foot of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Another by Pius IV. or V. to the Prince of Siena. There were Indulgences said to have been granted to the Confraternities of St. Sebastian and St. Roch at Perugia and at Rome; to the Society of St. Bernard at the Trajan Column; and to the Confraternities of St. Eustorgius at Milan, Rimini, and Bologna; that granted to those who wear the measure of our Blessed Saviour's height, or to the image or measure of the wound of His sacred side, or to the prayer which was supposed to have been found on His sepulchre.<sup>1</sup> And how often, especially in Italy, do we not come across men selling flying sheets with a prayer, and at the back the indication that Pope Clement, or Benedict, or John—which of the many Popes bearing those names the paper does not say—granted for its recitation a plenary Indulgence.

<sup>1</sup> Examples of similar apocryphal Indulgences are to be found in Fr. Theodore of the Holy Ghost, in his classical treatise on the Indulgences, ii. p. 247 and foll. See also *Decreta Authentica*, *passim*.

12. But all this is not the teaching of the Church. The Popes and Councils severely reproved such false publications. In 1330, Pope John XXII., on the 1st of November, caused throughout the whole kingdom of France all the brothers of the Hospital of Haut-Pas to be seized at the same hour, with all their goods, because they made a bad use of letters of Indulgences, and falsely asserted that they contained more Indulgences than had been granted. They were subsequently shut up in diverse episcopal prisons.<sup>1</sup>

The following year we read that the same Pope committed to the Bishop of Melphi and to the Inquisitor to proceed against a new sect of heretics, whose chief was a certain Angelus from the Valley of Spoleto, an illiterate layman; because, although they were not adorned with priestly character, yet, under the appearance of false sanctity, they presumed to hear the confessions of simple people, and to promise them various Indulgences.<sup>2</sup> With a like severity, Pope Boniface IX., in 1390, proceeded against certain beggars guilty of a similar imposture.<sup>3</sup>

13. Sometimes the errors came from the preachers themselves, and then the Church in her Councils, through her legates or by means of her Theological Faculties, hastened to correct the errors they had advanced.

Thus Clement V. in the Council of Vienne (1311),

<sup>1</sup> Spondanus, A.D. 1330, n. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Raynaldus, A.D. 1331, n. vi.

<sup>3</sup> Id., A.D. 1390, n. ii.

condemned those preachers who presumed to determine with precision the time when the souls in Purgatory are set free through Indulgences.<sup>1</sup>

When the famous Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa was in Germany as Apostolic Legate in 1450, it came to his notice that some preachers of Indulgences, misunderstanding, as Benedict XIV. tells us,<sup>2</sup> the words "a culpa et a pœna," sometimes used in the formula of concession, taught that Indulgences delivered the soul, both from the punishment due to sin and from the guilt thereof. This was false, as we have said,<sup>3</sup> for the Indulgence has nothing to do with the remission of the guilt. The Legate publicly rectified this point of doctrine in the Council of Magdeburg, saying that the Holy See did not grant Indulgences under this form "a culpa et a pœna."<sup>4</sup> Thirty-two years before (1418), the Council of Constance<sup>5</sup> had already decreed that all the Indulgences granted to any place with the formula "a pœna et culpa" or "de plena remissione," to avoid all misunderstandings, were revoked and annulled.

When a rash preacher in the diocese of Saintes in 1482, eager beyond measure for the rebuilding of the Church of St. Peter in that town, advanced that any one who would give for it an alms of six *blancs*—an ancient little coin worth a little more than

<sup>1</sup> Clem. de Abusionibus de Pœnit. et Remiss.

<sup>2</sup> De Syn. Diœc., lib. xiii. c. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> Page 56.

<sup>4</sup> See Raynaldus, A.D. 1450, n. x., who quotes the great Chronicle of Belgium.

<sup>5</sup> Sess. xliii. n. 14.. See Harduin, t. viii. p. 883.

half a farthing—would instantly deliver a soul from Purgatory, the Theological Faculty of Paris proscribed such a proposition, and proved the falsehood of the preacher's statement that this Indulgence was grounded on a Bull of Sixtus IV.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, when some prelates, misusing their powers, granted excessive Indulgences, the Church was careful to repress their ill-timed prodigality. Thus the fourth Council of Lateran, celebrated under Innocent III. in 1215, declared, "that the superfluous Indulgences which some prelates grant promiscuously cause the Keys of the Church to be despised, and enervate the satisfaction of penance. Wherefore the Fathers decree that, at the dedication of a church, the Indulgence be not more than one year's, whether the ceremony be performed by one bishop or by several; and that the Indulgence be only of forty days, for the anniversary of the dedication or for any other cause, since the Pope, even on these occasions, is not wont to grant more."<sup>2</sup>

This the Fathers of Trent re-echoed three centuries later, deploring the abuses "which had slipped into this point of ecclesiastical discipline, and on account of which this name Indulgence, so worthy of every respect, was blasphemed by heretics." Consequently, it prescribed that every criminal gain in the publication of these favours should be entirely abolished, as having been the cause of many abuses. And, that every disorder, coming either from superstition,

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. cxv. n. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, lib. lxxvii. n. 55.



ignorance, or irreverence, might the better be removed, the Council intrusted every Bishop with the duty of finding out such abuses, of making a report of them in the next Provincial Synod, and referring them afterwards, with the assent of the other Bishops, to the Sovereign Pontiff himself.<sup>1</sup>

14. But the greatest blame in the matter is to be thrown on those extravagant preachers who, as it was the fashion of the time, thought they could not conciliate their hearers' attention unless they put forward exaggerated and pretentious Indulgences. Ambition seldom goes without covetousness. In our case, it bred in these preachers a vehement desire of filthy lucre. As they received a percentage on the amount, they imposed on the credulity and simplicity of the faithful. They forgot the precept of evangelical poverty, and simoniacally extorted money as a condition for the granting of Indulgences, of which they were but the dispensers. The censure pronounced by Dante against these false preachers will remain as an everlasting brand on their memory :—

"The preacher now provides himself with store  
Of jests and gibes ; and, so there be no lack  
Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl  
Distends, and he has won the meed he sought :  
Could but the vulgar catch a glimpse the while  
Of that dark bird which nestles in his hood,  
They scarce would wait to hear the blessing said  
Which now the dotards hold in such esteem,

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<sup>1</sup> Sess. xxv., de Indulgentiis.

That every counterfeit, who spreads abroad  
 The hands of holy promise, finds a throng  
 Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony  
 Fattens with this his swine, and others worse  
 Than swine, who diet at his lazy board,  
 Paying with unstamp'd metal for their fare."<sup>1</sup>

But the Roman Pontiffs never countenanced this unworthy traffic. They opposed it with all their might. They enacted severe constitutions against these false preachers, and Luther himself, speaking of Leo X., was obliged to avow that this Pope had most clearly condemned in his decrees the impudence of the Quæstores.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes they forbade under pain of nullity to have the Indulgences published by Quæstores. The Bull granted to St. Manettus, fourth General of the Servite Order, in favour of the SS<sup>ma</sup>. Annunziata in Florence, and referred to above, is an instance.<sup>3</sup>

They likewise were careful to remove, in connection with Indulgences, anything which might even remotely suggest simoniacal intentions. In the Council of Bâle (1436), the Fathers had proposed to grant a Plenary Indulgence, to be gained once in life and again at the point of death, to those who would contribute with their alms towards the reunion of the Eastern Churches with the Western. Now, we

<sup>1</sup> Paradise, Canto xxix. verses 121 and foll., Cary's translation.

<sup>2</sup> Luth. Op. i. Præf.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. vii. n. 10, p. 222. The words are: "Quas (Indulgentias) mitti per Quæstuarios firmiter inhibemus; eas, si secus actum fuerit, carere viribus decernentes."

read<sup>1</sup> that the legates of Pope Eugene IV. strongly opposed such a decree, lest it should be thought that Indulgences were granted with a view of procuring money.

The same eagerness for the purity of doctrine moved the successors of Alexander VI. to dispense with the condition which this Pontiff had placed for gaining outside Rome the Jubilee Indulgence, viz., that the faithful should contribute a fixed alms towards the expenses of the war against the Turks. Thus did they wish to eliminate, in connection with Indulgences, even the least shadow of temporal interest.

15. As time went on, the Church took a yet more energetic course. The Holy Council of Trent utterly abolished the name and office of the ancient Quæstores, and annulled all the privileges annexed to their charge, *because they had made themselves guilty of great abuses in the publication of Indulgences*. It established, moreover, that Indulgences should for the future be granted altogether gratuitously,<sup>2</sup> a clause which Pius IV. in his decree "Decet Romanum Pontificem," published in 1562, renewed and enforced.

His successor, the great St. Pius V., in his Bull "Etsi dominici gregis," published in 1567, revoked all Indulgences for which something was to be paid, or by reason of which the Quæstores or Quæstuarii could collect money; and, in another Bull, published three

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, Hist. Eccl., lib. cix. n. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Sess. xxi. cap. ix.

years later, he ordered all the Bishops to destroy all briefs of Indulgences, for which a pecuniary contribution was to be given, and annulled all such documents and concessions.<sup>1</sup>

Thus do we see the Church ever anxiously watchful to keep, in its purity and entirety, the deposit of faith in the matter of Indulgences. What abuses crept in were the doings of private men. They did not affect the dogma itself. They were offsets which were to be lopped off, and the Husbandman whom Christ had appointed to keep and till His vineyard did his work.

These abnormal outgrowths were the result of an exuberance of vigour and luxuriance of life, which were the best warrant for the soundness of the tree. But a good logician knows how to distinguish the substantial value of an institution, from what is only accidentally and externally connected thereto; and none but a sophist will ever, from the fact of the abuses committed in the preaching of Indulgences, conclude with Luther that they are nothing but "impostures of the flatterers of the Court of Rome, proper only for losing the faith and gaining money."

16. In conclusion, let us warn the faithful that no circumspection can ever be too great in this important matter. For, it often happens that Indulgences, granted some centuries ago, have been revoked in subsequent years. As regards Indul-

<sup>1</sup> See Beringer, P. i. p. 108, 109, who quotes Fr. Theodore of the Holy Ghost, i. 105 and foll.

gences granted to the faithful of the whole world, the latest edition of the Roman *Raccolta* should serve as a guide and authentic rule, as it is published with the authority and special approbation of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences. Yet this book does not contain those Indulgences of a particular character which have been granted to special countries, dioceses, religious orders, confraternities, and churches. The books containing these Indulgences should bear the approbation of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, or at least of the Bishop of the respective diocese.

Greater care should yet be taken in the case of partial Indulgences of a great number of years, such as of several hundreds or thousands of years. These Indulgences are often nothing but forgeries; the more so, if they are attributed to Popes who lived in an epoch when such concessions were less copious than now-a-days. In the thirteenth century, an Indulgence of three and five years was an extraordinary grant, and Pope Nicholas IV. in a Bull of 1290 speaks of an Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines as of an exceptional favour. It was only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that such concessions became more abundant; but even then many of these Indulgences were false, or have been revoked and replaced by others.

Sometimes the forgery is too evident to allow the possibility of any mistake about it. As an instance, this is, we think, the case with the Indulgence of one



thousand years, and one hundred and twenty days, said to have been granted by Gregory IX. in 1238, on occasion of his consecrating the Church of St. Eusebius in Rome, to those who would visit the said church, from Wednesday in Holy Week to the Octave of Easter Sunday.

This Indulgence is thus recorded, in the spelling of the time, in an inscription engraved on a marble slab outside the west end wall under the portico and at the right on entering :—

✠ ANN. DNI. M.CC.XXXVIII. INDICTIO<sup>NE</sup>. XI. M<sup>ENSE</sup>  
MARTII. QVARTA FERIA. MAIORIS EDMODE QVADRA  
GESIME. D<sup>OMINUS</sup> GREGORIUS. P<sup>APAE</sup>. NONVS C<sup>ON</sup>SECRAVIT  
HANC ECCLESIA<sup>M</sup> IN HONORE BEATORVM EVSEBII. ET  
VINCENTII. CVM TRIBVS ALTARIBVS. QVORVM  
MAIVS ALTARE CONFESSORIS I<sup>ESU</sup> MANIBVS PRO  
PRIIS CONSECRAVIT. STATVENS VT OM<sup>NI</sup> ANNO  
A QVARTA FERIA MAIORIS EDMODE QVADRA  
GESIME VSQVE AD OCTAVAM. D<sup>OMINUS</sup> RESVRRECTI  
ONIS. HANC ECC<sup>LESIA</sup>M VISITANTES. MILLE. ANNIS  
ET CENT<sup>VM</sup> VIGINTI DIER<sup>VM</sup> DE INIVNTASIBI PENI  
TENTIA. INDVLGENTIAM CONSEQVANTVR.

“In the year of our Lord MCCXXXVIII., indiction XI., in the month of March, on Wednesday in Holy Week of Lent, our Lord Gregory IX., Pope, consecrated in honour of the Blessed Eusebius and Vincent this church with three altars, of which he consecrated with his own hands the high altar of the same Confessor, decreeing that every year, from the Wednesday in Holy Week of Lent to the Octave of Easter-Sunday, those who visit this church, may obtain a Pardon of one thousand years and one hundred and twenty days from the penance enjoined to them.”

Surely, the incongruous addition of one hundred and twenty days' Indulgence—in other words, of

three quarantines—to the enormous sum of one thousand years, cannot but give rise to some doubts as to the authenticity of the grant. The doubt is increased as one observes that the word MILLE is evidently a substitute for another number previously existing, and which apparently has been scraped out. Besides this, a single glance at the inscription which is on the other side of the wall ought to be amply sufficient to unmask the fraud and dispel every doubt. Therein it is said that in the year 1573—when already the Church was wont to bestow more copious Indulgences—Pope Gregory XIII. grants, to all the faithful who, being truly penitent and having confessed their sins, will visit the chapels of SS. Eusebius, Leo and Benedict in that church, from the first vespers of their feast until sunset every year, and will there pray for the concord among Christian princes, &c., an Indulgence of ten years and so many quarantines: *decem annos et totidem quadragenas de injunctis seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis*. Judging, therefore, by the first inscription, it would result that, for about the same work, the Pope, in the thirteenth century, would have granted an Indulgence of one thousand years and three quarantines, and in the seventeenth, ten years and so many quarantines, which is in open contradiction with what we know of the growing practice of the Church.

However, although the greater number of these considerable Indulgences may be said to be apocry-

phal, yet it is certain that several of them have been and are authentic. An Indulgence, for instance, of two hundred years can be gained for the recitation of the Rosary of the Seven Dolours, and every year the Sovereign Pontiff grants an Indulgence of one hundred years for each day of the Novena preparatory to the feast of Christmas, as this Novena is publicly practised in Rome.

“These high numbers,” says Father Beringer,<sup>1</sup> “should not astonish us, if we reflect that the Church very often permits the application of these Indulgences to the dead, and that there may be in Purgatory souls which have to pay a much more considerable debt. The sacred canons, for one single mortal sin, often imposed a penance of seven years and more. Are there not in Purgatory souls which, after having spent a long life in disorder, have been converted at the very last moment, but are still debtors to the divine justice of temporal penalties due for thousands of sins?”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les Indulgences, &c.*, P. I. ix. p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Cf. Bellarmine, De Indulgent., lib. i. c. ix.*

## CHAPTER X

### THE REVOLT

*"For they have said: . . . Let our strength be the law of justice . . . let us therefore lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings."*—WISD. ii. 11, 12.

#### THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Luther—The beginning of his defection from Rome—The Scholastic doctrines—The groundwork of Luther's system—Indulgences for the completion of St. Peter's—Excesses committed by the preachers—Luther's opposition—His adversaries, Tetzel and Eckius—Indulgences akin to Penance and Free-Will—Behaviour of the Church during the attack—Luther at the Pope's tribunal—Leo X.'s Decree—Luther applies to Erasmus—His conference with Eckius—The Bull "*Exurge Domine*"—Development in the practice of Indulgences—God's Providence over His Church.

1. BUT it is now time that we should treat of that epoch, when the very foundations of the Catholic Church were so violently shaken, that she would not have survived the assault had she been an earthly and mortal institution. Yet she stood still; nay, the fight strengthened her. But it was a bitter sight for her, to witness the defection of so many millions of her children in the provinces of the North. She could find no better expression of her grief than these words of Jeremias: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a

widow: the princes of provinces made tributary! Weeping, she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her: all her friends have despised her, and are become her enemies.”<sup>1</sup>

The man who was to win for himself the sad honour of having initiated this tremendous attack against the Spouse of Christ was Martin Luther.

When we read of the sentiments of his earlier life, we cannot but be amazed and wonder, how such an utter change could take place in him in the short space of a few years. The first time he had gone to Rome in 1510, he had fallen upon his knees, raised his hands to heaven, and exclaimed, “Hail! O holy Rome, truly sanctified by the holy martyrs and by their blood!” He had visited the Catacombs and churches; he had said Mass therein, and had expressed his grief that his parents were not yet dead, because he might thus have relieved them from Purgatory with his Masses, good works, and prayers.<sup>2</sup>

But a few years later, and in the book he wrote on the captivity of Babylon, Rome had become for him the great city of confusion, the sacrifice of the Mass the greatest of abominations, good works as many sins, and Indulgences frauds and impostures.

<sup>1</sup> Lam. i. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rohrbacher, liv. 84, § 1, who quotes Walcher, t. v. p. 1646, and t. xxii. p. 2374.



No less amazing is it to confront the terms of respectful submission with which he had protested his filial obedience to the Keys of Peter, and the base revilings with which he outraged the Pontiff, after the Bull had been issued which condemned him.

“Most holy Father,” he had written to Leo X. on Trinity Sunday, 1518, when already the propositions he had uttered had called forth the attention of the Catholic world,—“Most holy Father, I prostrate myself at the feet of thy Blessedness; I offer myself to thee with all I am and all I have; give life or death, call or recall, approve or reprove, as it shall please thee; thy voice will I hear, even as that of Jesus Christ, who abides in thee, and speaks through thy mouth.” He had written a similar letter, the following year, on the 21st of March; a letter full of protestations of fidelity, recognising the authority of the Pope as the first after that of Jesus Christ.

Only one year later, the Pope had become for him the very person of Antichrist; his teaching, heresy; his voice of command, oppression and tyranny; his court, a rock of scandal and a place of abominations. How could a man, in such a short time, utter such contradictory statements? A great change must have taken place in him, first in the intellectual, and next in the moral order. What were the causes of this change?

2. Historians generally attribute the origin of

Luther's defection from the Church, and consequently of the Reformation, to the formal denial he made of Indulgences in 1517. But Rohrbacher<sup>1</sup> shows, documents in hand, that the origin of the errors of Luther is to be traced back to another cause and to an earlier period. In fact, the learned historian attributes the beginning of Luther's errors to his contempt for the logic of Aristotle and to his departure from sound scholastic teaching.

In 1516 after he had for many years taught the "Physics" of Aristotle in Wittenberg, without, however, grasping the system, he wrote to the Prior of the Augustinians in Erfurth: "I desire nothing more, had I time to do it, than to lay bare before a great multitude, and show in all his shamefulness this comic writer (viz., Aristotle), who has amused for so long a time the Church with his Greek mask." The same year, 1516, he wrote to George Spalatine, the private secretary of the Elector of Saxony, "Our theology and St. Augustine are in progress, and Aristotle is declining fast, together with the Schoolmen." In the beginning of 1517, and before the question of Indulgences had been broached, he published ninety-nine theses against the Scholastic doctrine and the *Dreams of Aristotle*.

His love for the teaching of St. Thomas was no greater than for that of the Philosopher of Stagira. When, on the 16th of October 1518, he stole away from Augsburg, where the Apostolic

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Univ. de l'Eglise Catholique, lib. lxxxiv.

Legate, Cardinal Cajetan, had been commissioned by the Pope to hold with him a conference to the end of bringing him back from his errors, he placarded an appeal "from the Pope badly informed, to the Pope better informed;" and stated, among other reasons of his withdrawal, that he could not defer to the sentiments of St. Thomas, which Cajetan followed.

The fact is not without its deep meaning. The new proselytiser, the *Ecclesiastes* of Wittenberg, as he used to style himself, had a twofold end in view, to destroy the Church then existing, and to build upon its ruins a conventicle after his own fashion. That he should have begun by despising and rejecting Scholastic philosophy and theology, is for us a most clear evidence of the value of the same for the preservation of the Church.

3. We have not here to trace the history or to make the apology of Scholasticism. The seed sowed by St. John Damascene, and watered by Peter Lombard and St. Anselm, had grown to a stately tree under the care of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. Taking the dogmas of the Church, they classified them, sifted them through the refinement of reason, distinguished in them the cause from the effect, the genus from the species, and presented them under clearer forms, clothing them with new and more definite terms.

Under the light of the Angelic and Seraphic Doctors, these dogmas appeared no longer indepen-

dent tenets, isolated truths, but a body of doctrine ruled by some invariable principle, bound with close relations, and quickened by mutual operations. Among others, the dogma of Indulgences was set forth with perfect precision as to its main lines. However, it is to be deplored that the Angelic Doctor did not live to bring to completion that incomparable "*Summa Theologica*," his masterpiece, and mark with the depth and clearness which distinguishes this book, the nature and working of Indulgences.

In the sixteenth century the Scholastic doctrines were still held in high repute. The Angelic and the Seraphic schools counted a host of doctors who, if at times they indulged in useless subtleties and unprofitable disputes over endless questions, still had mastered to perfection the Scholastic system, and could meet, armed with such a panoply, any aggressive attack on the dogmas of the Church.

Luther knew something of the working of that system of teaching natural and revealed truths; —too little to have made a real profit in it; too much to have appreciated its bearing and its strength. Hence, he understood that he could not strike an efficacious blow at the city itself, and reduce it to ruins, unless he first pulled down the bulwarks and bastions that surrounded and protected it. He understood that the shortest and surest way of conquering the adverse ranks was to snatch from the soldiers' hands the weapons wherein they trusted. In other words, he was put-

ting in practice what one of his followers, Bucerus, afterwards expressed with his *Tolle Thomam et dissipabo Ecclesiam*—"Take away St. Thomas and I will lay waste the Church."

Thanks to the Providence of God, the champions of the Church understood the peril; they clung fast to their arms, and remained victorious. Luther's cry had for its effect to raise up a whole constellation of great theologians, who coupled with depth of doctrine strength of Scholastic method. Be it enough to mention, in the first place, the incomparable Cajetan, with his deep, unsurpassable commentaries on St. Thomas, and Bellarmine with his unrivalled controversies, set forth with remarkable clearness of thought and strictness of logic.

A century later, the greater part of the schools of theologians were drawn away from the path beaten during so many centuries, by the dazzling appearance of the new method brought forth by Descartes. For well-nigh two centuries, the Scholastic doctrines were superseded by the new theories; but with what result has appeared of late years. The dogmas of the Church, impugned by her adversaries, found no victorious defenders, except among those few who, notwithstanding the universal scorn, had kept and fostered the sacred fire of Scholastic teaching. It will not be the least among the glories of the Pontificate of our most holy Father Leo XIII., that he called back theologians and philosophers to the ancient Scholastic method, and bade them draw their



doctrines out of the limpid and never-failing wells of St. Thomas.<sup>1</sup>

Henry VIII. himself, if he was able to confute Luther, whom he used to call the "scourge of the anger of God against Christians," owed it to the great St. Thomas, whom he had deeply studied, and upon whom he bestowed unending praise. Happy, indeed, had he remained faithful to such sound teaching. Strange to say, it was that book in which he proved and defended the points attacked by Luther, and among others the doctrine of Indulgences, which gained for him from Leo X., to whom he had dedicated the work, the title of *Fidei Defensor*, which the sovereigns of England retain to the present day. *Fidei Defensor*, that is, of *that* faith which is contained in that book of his, and which the Church of Rome then professed, including the doctrine of Indulgences. So the sovereigns of Protestant England publicly call themselves the defenders of the Roman faith, including the doctrine of Indulgences!<sup>2</sup>

4. Thus departing from the tradition of the School,

<sup>1</sup> "Providete ut sapientia Thomæ ex ipsis ejus fontibus hauriatur." —Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII., "Æterni Patris." Cf. *Sacræ Doctrinæ Thomisticæ Studii Utilitas Demonstrata*, by Alexius M. Lépicier, O.S.M., Rome, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Upon this title, see Rev. T. E. Bridgett's C.S.S.R. pamphlet, "The Defender of the Faith: The Royal Title, its History and Value," London, Burns & Oates, wherein the author maintains the opinion that the book "*Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*" is really the work of Henry's pen. "Henry's condemnations, objurgations, and appeals," says Fr. Bridgett, c. iii. p. 43, "remind the modern reader less of Luther's extravagances than of Henry's own."

and placing himself in a state of anarchy independent of the rules of faith, Luther framed to himself a new system of doctrine. The fundamental point of it was faith, an absolute, but at the same time a bare, theoretical, sterile faith, which, according to him, is alone capable of justifying man.

It is said that the germs of this theory were suggested to him by one of the Religious of his Order. One day Martin Luther was in doubts about his vocation and his eternal salvation. He went to lay open the state of his mind to that Religious. He received an answer that he was to believe in his salvation, and rest entirely upon this belief. This thought struck Luther's mind, especially when he read those passages of St. Paul to the Romans, where the Apostle extols the principle of faith above the works of the law.

Following his private impulse, he made faith, and faith alone, to be the only cause of justification and salvation; without it, all is useless; with it all is superfluous. Consequently good works are superfluous—nay, sinful; the Sacraments either are a useless invention, or else they do not confer grace; penance is an injury to Christ, who has fully satisfied for us. And what about Indulgences? They are but a vain and useless invention, fit only to deceive the faithful.

But Luther did not come at once to this conclusion; he understood that a bold denial of what the Church universally practised would have prejudiced

his work of reformation, and so he proceeded by steps, as we shall show.

5. At that time, therefore, Pope Leo X., magnificent in his projects, as the family from which he had sprung, undertook to complete the building of St. Peter's at Rome, which Julius II., his predecessor, had begun some few years before. But large sums of money were yet wanted. The work was one that conduced to the glory of God and the good of souls, and so the Pope sent Indulgences to the northern provinces of Germany, even as Julius had done to Poland and France, in favour of those who would contribute with their alms towards the completion of that work.

He intrusted Albert, Elector of Mainz, and Archbishop of Magdeburg, with the care of naming in Germany the preachers of these Indulgences. For Saxony, John Tetzel, the Provincial of the Dominicans, was appointed, and this delegate sub-delegated those of his Religious whom he thought fit for that work.

6. History tells us how in some places these preachers did not discharge their office with that amount of respect and gravity, which became their priestly character and the holiness of their mission. There was in some a show of boastful presumption, which prompted them to utter propositions which they were not commissioned to preach—nay, which were reprov'd by the Church as heretical. In others, covetousness and the desire of amassing large

sums, by which perhaps they were in hopes of benefiting, made them partial in the concession of these Indulgences, as if they were to be weighed by the farthing. Others, roving from town to town, set up their dispensing offices in taverns, and, amid the clatter of the wine-cups, received the alms of the faithful and distributed the Indulgences.

Some even presumed to say that every contributor, if he paid on his own account, infallibly opened for himself the gates of heaven; if on account of the dead, he instantly liberated a soul from the prison of Purgatory.<sup>1</sup>

Thank God, these abuses were not universal. Many showed themselves faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God. But as it has always been, so will it ever be until the end of time, that the tares shall be mixed with the wheat, even among the ministers of the Gospel. In our case the tares were conspicuous enough to afford any one, eager to calumniate the Church, a favourable opportunity.

7. Luther seized the occasion. It was some time since he had been anxious to manifest himself to the world, to shine forth, no matter under what shades of colour, to make men speak of him, to bring to light his system of doctrine, which he had been hatching

<sup>1</sup> John Lingard, D.D. *The History of England*, vol. iv. c. vii. It is to be noted, however, that these accusations originate for the greater part, from the preachers' adversaries, who, as Lingard observes, were interested in the matter.

for many years, and set it up in the middle of the Catholic Church as a bold defiance.

Indeed, he could have found no better opportunity. His apparent object was to defend the purity of faith and morals. The thought that an Order, which he looked upon as a rival, had been preferred to his own, urged him to take the side of the body to which he belonged against the adverse party; and in this he shielded himself under the cloak of obedience, for John Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the Augustinians, commissioned him to oppose the preachers of Indulgences and to denounce their excesses, assuring him at the same time of his protection.

Luther did so; but from the abuses of Indulgences to the doctrine thereof there was but one step, and he made it.

On the Eve of All-Saints, 1517, he publicly sustained at Wittenberg ninety-five short theses on the nature of Indulgences and the errors of the Quæstors. It is true that, in his pamphlet against Hans Worst which he published in 1541, he repeatedly asserted, and confirmed the assertion with an oath,<sup>1</sup> that when he began to preach against Indulgences he did not even know himself what an Indulgence was; but what cared he for truth, if only he could have his own way? Passion in him had overthrown conviction.

These ninety-five theses are a mixture of erroneous

<sup>1</sup> Luther's Works, Wittenberg edit., 1572, pp. 12, 324.



propositions, of rash and new opinions, of right sentences. He says, among other things, that Indulgences are but a relaxation of the canonical penances; that they procure no relief to the souls in Purgatory; that they are not to be preferred to good works, &c. The seventy-first proposition is worthy of notice: "If any one denies the truthfulness of the Indulgences of the Pope, let him be anathema."

Luther sent these propositions to Albert, Archbishop of Magdeburg, with a letter in which he asked him to remedy the evil caused by the preachers. The love and zeal for truth which Luther affected; the freedom, apparently apostolic, with which he censured what he styled the rapacity of the Court of Rome, and the personal avarice of the Quæstores; the patronage which most of those propositions could claim from some or other of the orthodox theologians, dazzled many, and disposed generally the public mind in his favour.

8. But God had sent him a valorous opponent in the person of the Dominican Provincial John Tetzel.<sup>1</sup> He immediately answered Luther's propositions, by publishing one hundred and six theses contrary to those of the Augustinian friar, and in which the Catholic doctrine on Indulgences was clearly set forth.

<sup>1</sup> See Tetzel's justification by Dr. Janssen, *Histoire du Peuple Allemand*, t. ii. p. 77, and Dr. Groene, *Tetzel et Luther, ou Histoire et Justification du Dr. J. Tetzel, prédicateur des Ind. et Inquisiteur*. 2me édit., Soest.

He was a deep and well-read theologian, and represented with advantage the traditions of the school of St. Thomas, and the firmness of Catholic doctrine, which the Dominican Order, above all others, has the mission to defend. He was, moreover, shrewd, with much foresight, and he gauged at once the depth of error to which Luther's assertions could lead.

But had he, with this sagacity of intellect, coupled a greater meekness of heart, the Catholic truth would not thereby have suffered in the least; and perhaps those that opposed it might have been kept back from falling into the miserable abyss, dragging along with them multitudes in their fall. The simplicity of the dove has never prejudiced the prudence of the serpent. Indeed, Tetzl might have spared burning publicly Luther's theses, and then the world would not perhaps have been amused with the comedy of seeing immediately afterwards Luther's disciples burning Tetzl's propositions in the great square of Wittenberg.

Another conspicuous champion of Catholic truth was John Eckius, Doctor in Divinity, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt. In the beginning of 1518 he wrote some notes on the propositions of Luther, vindicating, in favour of the Catholic doctrine of Indulgences, the unbroken tradition of the Church.

9. But Luther was sufficiently awake to the truth that the question of Indulgences is but a secondary

question, dependent on that of penance and free-will. Indeed, if there be such a thing as penance, a relaxation of the same is possible to be granted by him who has been offended or by his representative; and if there be free-will in man, there is also responsibility and morality in his actions—the possibility of doing good and of doing evil, of being rewarded for the good done, and of being punished for the evil perpetrated.

But if we abolish Pardons or Indulgences, we must take away also the truthfulness of penance and the existence of good and penitential works, and place man under the necessity of doing good or of doing evil, without his being responsible for it.

If we are not greatly mistaken, the teachings of modern materialists and rationalists are but, under another form, a reproduction of Luther's doctrines.

To the notes of Eckius, then, Luther gave answer by publishing erroneous theses on penance and freewill, and henceforth in the disputes between the Catholic and Lutheran theologians we see the question of Indulgences superseded, and almost eclipsed, by the debates on penance and the sacraments, on free-will and justification.

10. At this time, also, we cannot help remarking, much to the credit of the Church, how dignified was her behaviour before the bold-faced assaults and shameless revilings of her adversaries, how noble

was her resistance to their rude blows and impudent attacks. She stood as a matron whose virtue is her safeguard, whose righteous deeds are her bulwarks. Following the advice of St. Paul to Timothy, she contended not in words, for it is to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. She carefully studied to present herself approved unto God, a workwoman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.<sup>1</sup>

Before the controversy had taken this new aspect, and at the very time when the question of Indulgences was captivating the Catholic world, the Church was continuing to condemn erroneous opinions, and asserting the right doctrine through her Catholic Universities.

On the 6th of May of the year 1518, the Theological Faculty of Paris censured as false and scandalous this proposition: "Whoever puts in the box for the Crusade one 'teston'<sup>2</sup> for a soul in Purgatory, this soul goes immediately and infallibly into Paradise. And if he put ten 'testons' for ten souls, then ten souls go immediately to Paradise." On the other hand, the said Faculty approved as true this other proposition: "It is not certain that in Purgatory all the souls for each of which the faithful put in the crusade-box ten 'sols-tournois' go immediately into Paradise, but we must abide by God's judgment, who

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii, 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> An ancient silver coin worth about eightpence halfpenny of English money.

accepts as He pleases the treasure of the Church applied to the said souls."

Meanwhile, the Church went on granting Indulgences, just as though no question had ever been raised against them. At that time, Pope Leo X. had sent to England Cardinal Lawrence Campeggio with a twofold mission. The first was to obtain from the clergy a subsidy in money to enable him to carry on the war against the Turks. The other to induce Henry VIII. to enter into the league which he had planned, and in which all Christian princes would unite, for the defence of religion and of the Church. Cardinal Wolsey was associated with him as joint-Legate.

Campeggio made his solemn entry into London on the 29th of July 1518, and a Bull from the Pope was read, by which he granted Indulgences to all those who would assist at the Mass which one or other of these two Legates would celebrate in presence of the king or of the queen, or at least would receive the prelates' blessing, provided they were contrite for their sins and had been to confession.

Likewise, when Henry VIII.'s work, "*Assertio*," &c., was presented to Leo X., the latter "declared that the king's book contained an 'admirable doctrine,' and granted an Indulgence to those who should read it."<sup>1</sup>

11. Notwithstanding the protestations of fidelity

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Bridgett, "*The Defender of the Faith*," &c., c. iii. p. 41.



and submission sent at repeated times by Luther to the Pope, his persistency in holding doctrines contrary to those of the Church exposed him to be judged by an ecclesiastical tribunal. Leo X. reserved the case to himself and summoned him to Rome, granting him sixty days to make the journey. But Luther could not easily be induced to expose himself, and defend his new doctrine where the Lamp of Truth was ever burning and its light too dazzling for his eyes. He alleged some futile reasons as preventing him from making such a journey, and asked to be judged in Germany.

The Pope consented, and sent Cardinal Thomas de Vio, the celebrated Cajetan,<sup>1</sup> already mentioned above. He appointed for the meeting the town of Augsburg in Swabia, where the Emperor Maximilian was then holding a Diet or assembly.

The Cardinal held but two conferences with Luther on the question of Indulgences. In the first conference, Cajetan quoted the Constitution of Clement VI.,<sup>2</sup> published in 1349, in which it is said that the merits of Jesus Christ compose the treasure of Indulgences; that one drop only of His most Precious Blood would have been enough to wash away the sins of millions of worlds, if they existed, and consequently that His merits were inexhaustible; that, together with these merits, those of the Mother of God and of the saints concurred to form the trea-

<sup>1</sup> So called from Gaeta or Cajeta, his birthplace.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. viii. n. 11, p. 261.

sury of the Church, not as a necessary element, but through superabundance.

Luther answered that this Constitution was not grounded on any authority of Holy Scripture, and that the saints could not have had any superabundance of merits, since they were not even able to acquit themselves of their obligations.

This was waiving the question of Indulgences, and entering into that of justification by faith alone, or, in other words, into what may be called in Luther's mind the question of the sinfulness of good works. This did not escape the keen perception of Cajetan. He understood that the question of Indulgences would never be terminated at that rate, and so he cut short any digression by urging Luther to acknowledge the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. If Luther did so, the debate was at an end, and the question resolved in two words; and the point concerning Indulgences was but an atom lost among the huge amount of dogma, which belief in the authority of the Pope implicitly contains. But Luther shifted the question, and gave then a distinction which the Jansenists of the seventeenth century afterwards eagerly adopted, and which became their stronghold. He appealed from the Pope badly informed to the Pope better informed.

In the second and last conference, Luther, accompanied by four senators from Augsburg, presented to Cajetan a paper in which—strange contradiction—he protested his obedience to the Holy See, not-

withstanding that he did not admit the Constitution of Clement VI. The heresiarch was beginning to repudiate the authority of Peter, to separate himself from the Tree of Life; the root of schism had been planted; it only remained for him to complete the work.

This was the object at which he had aimed from the very beginning; the question of Indulgences had only been a pretext to him, as it had been a pretext a century before to the Hussites, to oppose the Church. What he wished for, was to shake off the yoke of the Pope and constitute himself the high priest of a new religion, the basis of which would be independence from all authority, and no *Indulgence*, but rather a war to the death with any principle that tended to lessen this unbridled freedom.

12. However, as Luther's doctrines were daily taking ground, lest the faithful should waver in their belief, Leo X., on the 9th of December of the same year 1518, issued a decree in which he declared that the Sovereign Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter and the Vicar of Jesus Christ, possesses, in virtue of the Keys, the power of remitting both the guilt and the penalty of sins; the guilt by the Sacrament of Penance, and the temporal penalty by Indulgences; that he can grant, for just and reasonable causes, such Indulgences to the faithful who are the members of Jesus Christ; that their usefulness does not extend only to the living but to the dead also; that they are drawn out of the superabundant merits of Jesus

Christ and of the saints, of which treasury the Pope is the dispenser, not only by form of absolution, but also by way of suffrage.

13. Luther was fully conscious of his own weakness, and of the disadvantages of the cause he had undertaken to defend. He sought for help and support from others. Erasmus was then astonishing Germany by the vastness of his erudition. The name which he had gained for himself by his works on the Oriental texts of the Bible, the eagerness he showed in embracing new doctrines, above all, the invectives he had uttered, some time before Luther, against the Scholastic doctrines, against religious Orders, against Indulgences, were so many reasons which prompted the Friar of Wittenberg to draw to his cause such a useful helpmate. In fact, according to the testimony of Albertus Pius, Erasmus, long before Luther, had inveighed against Indulgences, which, he said, served the faithful as water-clocks to measure the time of Purgatory—centuries, years, months, days, hours, as if from a mathematical table.

But Erasmus, who had playfully tried his wits on subjects closely connected with the dogmas of the Church, was frightened at the idea of leaving her, whom he knew to be the only guide to the harbour of salvation. In this sense he answered Luther, endeavouring to show him the falseness of the road wherein he had engaged himself; and putting forth all the sweetest words of his vocabulary to bring him

back to the Church. Vain efforts ! Luther was determined to go to the end of his errors.<sup>1</sup>

14. Soon an event took place which proved that the cause of Luther's adhesion to his own opinion was not sheer love for truth. On the 11th of July 1519, John Eckius held a conference with Luther and Melancthon at Leipsic, in the castle of Duke George of Saxony, uncle to the Elector Frederic, on the question of Indulgences. Such was the amount of authorities brought forth by Eckius from tradition, St. Gregory, the Councils of Vienne, of Lateran, of Constance ; such was the weight of his arguments, and the clearness of his reasoning, that Luther was constrained to admit the existence in the Church of the power to grant such pardons ; he even acknowledged the usefulness of Indulgences ; but rather than surrender, he gave way to the most virulent attacks against the preachers of the same.

After the conference, though evidently he had had the worst of the fight, he retracted none of his errors, but pursued his desperate course, and went on pouring forth endless invectives against the Pope, the Church, and her dogmas.

Rome had patiently waited for nearly three years, withholding her censures, in the hope that Luther

<sup>1</sup> See Raynaldus, A.D. 1516, n. xcvi. See also Erasmus' book "*Laus Stultitiæ*." It is a fact worthy of notice that the great founder of the Society of Jesus would never read the books of Erasmus ; nay, when he was General of the Society, he forbade his Religious to do so, or at least warned them not to read his works without great precautions. Rohrbacher, *Hist Eccl.*, lib. lxxxiv. n. 9.



would disabuse himself and come back to the belief of his fathers. Other authorities had not been so patient. In August 1519, the University of Cologne had solemnly condemned Luther and his writings, and in November that of Louvain had followed the example. The Order to which he belonged became startled at the audacity of him who had given first such bright hopes of himself. Consequently the Chapter deputed two Religious to bring him back; but all was in vain.

15. John Eckius and John Ulric had already repaired to Rome to denounce Luther. The Pope had lost every hope of bringing him back to the path of truth. Schism and heresy were taking alarming proportions. In consequence, Leo X. issued his Bull "*Exsurge Domine*," in which he condemned in forty-one articles the doctrine of Luther on Penance, Indulgences, the power of the Church, of the Popes, and of the Councils, good works, and Purgatory.

The introductory part of this Bull shows that the Pope fully appreciated the danger and trembled at its consequences, and that he had placed his confidence in anything but the help of man.

The articles on Indulgences are six in number. It will not be amiss to give them here at full length, for the contradictory propositions contain the true doctrine of the Catholic Church, and serve to illustrate more and more the dogmatical concept of tradition concerning Indulgences.

I. The treasures of the Church, out of which the Pope grants Indulgences, are neither the merits of Christ nor those of the saints.

II. Indulgences are pious frauds practised on the faithful ; they dispense them from doing good works, and are of the number of those things which are lawful but not expedient.

III. Indulgences, in those who gain them, do not indeed remit the pain due to Divine Justice for actual sins.

IV. It is a mistake and an illusion to believe that Indulgences are wholesome and useful.

V. Indulgences are only necessary for public crimes, and are not properly granted except to those who are hard-hearted and impenitent.

VI. They are not useful nor necessary to six sorts of persons : to the dead or to those who are on the point of death ; to the sick ; to those who are detained by lawful impediment ; to such as have not committed crimes ; to those who have only committed secret sins, and to those who practise the works of the highest perfection.

A more flagrant misrepresentation of the Catholic doctrine, and a more evident inconsistency, could hardly be found than what Luther taught in these six heretical propositions. Indeed, if it is a mistake to believe that Indulgences are wholesome and useful, why should they be properly granted to such as are hard-hearted and impenitent ? And if, as Henry VIII. observed, Luther denied the existence of

Purgatory altogether, why should he at all dispute about the subsidy wherewith we are freed from Purgatory?<sup>1</sup> But this is not all that could be said on the matter.

After his condemnation, Luther threw off the mask openly. As a ferocious lion, he broke his chains, and gave himself up to tear what was most holy and venerated in the Church of God. There was not a dogma he left entire, not a practice he did not condemn ; and, trampling under foot the traditions of fifteen centuries, he preached a new gospel, the foundation and the end of which was the worship of self. We need not say how quickly the new doctrines spread far and wide, owing to the favour of temporal princes and to the relaxation of the clergy in Germany, nor with what vicissitudes of contradiction and of approval they were received afterwards in England.

The ultimate result was, as regards this country, the drawing up of a new creed composed of thirty-nine erroneous and contradictory statements ; the twenty-second of which contains words of reprobation and of high-flown contempt for Indulgences, a doctrine which had been held by the Universal Church for seventeen centuries, and a practice which

<sup>1</sup> "Quid profuerit cum illo loqui quibus subsidiis liberemur a Purgatorio, qui totum ferme tollit Purgatorium?"—De Primatu Rom. Pont. et de Indulgentiis adversus Lutherum. Extracted from Henry Eighth's "Assertio" and inserted in Rocaberti, *Biblioth. Pont. Max.*, t. xiii. Romæ, 1698.

had, up to that time, sanctified men and given glory to God.

16. Yet such a categorical denial of the doctrine of Indulgences was not without a good result. The opposition had had a twofold object : first, darkening the notion itself of Indulgences, and traducing the doctrine as an erroneous and heterogeneous addition to the teaching of Christ and of His Apostles ; second, rooting out from among the faithful a practice which was regarded as superstitious.

A contrary result took place in both cases. As to the doctrine, new definitions were formed by the Church, precisely the reverse of those very assertions which heretics had uttered. We have already seen this in two instances : in the definition of Leo X. of the 9th of December 1518, and in the Bull "Exsurge Domine" just quoted, of the 15th of June 1520. And when a Council of the Universal Church had gathered at Trent, in the twenty-fifth session, held on December 3rd and 4th, 1563, under Pius IV., it was decreed that the power of granting Indulgences had been conferred by Christ on His Church ; that the origin of this divine institution was to be traced back to most ancient times ; that such a practice was most wholesome to Christian people ; and that, being approved by the authority of sacred Councils, it was by all means to be retained ; and the Council struck with anathema such as denied their usefulness or failed to acknowledge the power of the Church in their dispensation. So that in this case, if ever, the

word of St. Augustine proved true, that "truth would not be sought after, with so much care and diligence, if it had no adversaries."<sup>1</sup>

As to the practice, far from being in any way weakened, it went on increasing as a growing torrent. From the sixteenth century down to our own times, a noble strife was seen between the pastors and the faithful as to who should be foremost, the former in granting, the latter in availing themselves of those spiritual riches. It is consoling, and at the same time edifying, to read in the lives of the saints what ingenious stratagems they made use of, to gain as many Indulgences as they could. The Church, too, on her part, may be said to have reached the climax of liberality in this line of concession.

17. God is ever watching with anxious care over His Church. From the time she sprang forth out of the sacred side of her Heavenly Spouse, even to the present day, she has been ever growing stronger, and spreading forth her mighty influence over the world at large; and the malice of men has not been able to stop her progress or to stint her growth.

If any of her ministers ever prove a Judas, God has another ready upon whom to bestow the latter's "bishopric."<sup>2</sup> If "a nation choose not to know Him, and kingdoms not to call upon His name,"<sup>3</sup> "behold

<sup>1</sup> "Negligentius quæreretur (veritas) si adversarios non haberet."—Serm. li, cap. vii, n. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cviii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 6.



He calleth another nation which He knew not, and the nations which knew not Him run to him.”<sup>1</sup>

While, then, Luther, distorting his divine mission, was ruining good morals and the religion of Christ by the bold negation of the existence of free-will in man, of the usefulness of good works and penance, St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his solitude at Manresa, was writing, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, his wonderful “Spiritual Exercises,” which are a flat denial of Luther’s assertions, and were destined to work a true and lasting reformation in the world at large.

While the apostate friar was inveighing against Indulgences, calling them vain and frivolous institutions and impostures of the Church of Rome, the illustrious founder of the Society of Jesus was giving to the hosts of sons whom he was to beget to the Church in course of time, a splendid example of the value they should set on them, by starting off from Manresa as a poor, unknown pilgrim, in order to visit Rome and the holy places, where he might gain for himself the holy treasures of the Indulgences.

And not content to preach by example, he would, a few years later (1540), write to his own countrymen, the inhabitants of Aspezia: “Indulgences are such excellent goods, that I find myself incapable of praising and extolling them as they deserve: the only thing which remains to me to do is to pray

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lv. 5.

and entreat you all, through the love and respect which you owe to God, to esteem them highly, and to endeavour to profit by them with all the care of which you are capable.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cartas de San Ignacio de Loyola, i. 92.

## CHAPTER XI

### LOSS OR GAIN?

*"The wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord."*—ROM. vi. 28.

#### INDULGENCES IN THE PRESENT DAY

Sacred Congregation of Relics and Indulgences—Its authentic books—The Jubilee extended to the whole world—The Jubilee of 1825—Liberality of the Church at the present day—Exaggerated difficulties—We are the younger children of the Church—Her compassion for human weakness—Indulgences make us value the Passion of Christ—They foster the spirit of prayer—They keep alive the fear of God—They promote charity—The "Heroic Act"—Its manifold advantages—Good effects of Indulgences—Bad effects of Protestantism—The study of history—Indulgences a claim of human nature—The basis of domestic and social relations—Instilled in public institutions—Epilogue.

1. WE have said that the controversy raised by Luther and his followers on the question of Indulgences ultimately resulted in calling forth, on the part of the prelates, a greater liberality to grant pardons, and on the part of the faithful a greater eagerness to receive them. The opposition had, however, another good result, and it was that of determining the Church to submit the dispensation of Indulgences to a systematic organisation, and to establish to that end a special department of ecclesiastical economy.

The Council of Trent had given the impulse. After asserting, as we have said, in general terms, the possession in the Church of the right of granting pardons, it had declared the use of them to be wholesome to the faithful, and inculcated the necessity of rooting up every abuse which might have crept therein.

The imminent death of the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IV. had not allowed the Fathers to enter into fuller particulars upon that subject. The Council, opened in 1545, was closed in 1563. A few years later Clement VIII. (1592-1605), guided by the spirit of this decree, named a Commission composed of several cardinals and prelates remarkable for their learning and piety, whose office would be to assist the Pope in regulating the dispensation of Indulgences, according to the canons of the fourth Council of Lateran, and the spirit of the Trentine Decree. Cardinal Baronius in his works describes this Commission, and Cardinal Bellarmine mentions it with praise.

Clement's successor, Paul V. (1605-1621), who, whilst as yet a cardinal, had been a member of that Commission, continued his predecessor's work; and the result was the suppression of many apocryphal Indulgences, said to have been granted to Confraternities or to Religious Orders. But it was only in 1669 that Clement IX. founded in a lasting manner a special Congregation, called the "Sacred Congregation of Holy Relics and Indulgences," composed of a Cardinal-Prefect, of several other

cardinals, of a certain number of consultors, and of a secretary, all of whom are appointed by the Pope.

The office of this Congregation is to examine into all the matters which concern Indulgences and sacred relics, to solve doubts, to issue decrees relating thereunto, and to proscribe every abuse known to exist with reference to Indulgences and Sacred Relics.

In matters of greater importance, this Congregation refers, through the secretary, the decision to the Holy Father in a special audience ; but in matters of lesser weight, the Cardinal-Prefect can, in virtue of the powers annexed to his office, decide cases and grant Indulgences. The Congregation in its solemn or general sessions examines greater doubts and resolves more serious difficulties ; but then, one or several consultors of the Congregation previously intrusted with the care of studying the question with the greatest accuracy, read a *votum*, or elaborate paper, the result of their study, by which the other members may be guided in giving their decision.

2. One of the most important works of this Congregation is the publication of a book, containing the prayers and good works which the Holy See has enriched with Indulgences. This book is called *Raccolta*.

Previous to 1877, the editions of this book were only semi-official, as they were but the work of a private consultor. But the two latest editions, viz.,



those of 1877 and of 1886, have been published under the immediate care of the Sacred Congregation and by order of the Sovereign Pontiff, so that they represent, in an authentic manner, all the concessions made in general for all the faithful, and without limit of time. However, in case of a difference between the two editions, a decree guides us to prefer the latter, and to stand by it. This book contains, moreover, certain general observations, couched in a brief and precise style, and extracted from the different decisions enacted by the Holy See.

It is hardly needful to observe how becoming it is for each Catholic to possess a copy of this valuable work, whereby he may continually be enabled, by the recitation of those indulgenced prayers, to atone for his sins, and to relieve the suffering souls in Purgatory, for all the Indulgences contained in this book are applicable to the souls of the faithful departed.<sup>1</sup>

Another equally important work published by the care of the same Congregation, is the collection of over four hundred and fifty decrees or declarations, given during the last two hundred years and more, in answer to different questions proposed to this Congregation, concerning Indulgences or Relics. This work, the acts of which have been immediately taken from the Archives of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, was published in 1883 by the command of our Holy Father, Leo XIII., who, the year before,

<sup>1</sup> Decr. Sept. 30, 1842.

had given to this compilation his supreme approbation, and had commanded all the faithful to consider it as authentic. The title is "*Decreta Authentica Sacræ Congregationis Indulgentiis, Sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ.*"<sup>1</sup>

A simple perusal of these authentic documents of the Church will convince the reader of two important facts: the one is the anxious solicitude of the Church not to grant Indulgences, except for some holy purpose, and on condition that the faithful perform some pious act of devotion; the second, that the liberality of the Church in this respect has ever been growing greater and greater.

3. The Jubilee is a striking proof of this truth. We have seen above how the Sovereign Pontiffs began in the Middle Ages to grant more frequent dispensations from going to Rome in order to gain the Jubilee. Boniface IX. had made this a special concession, in perpetuity, in favour of several towns, and in the case of the Jubilee of 1500, Alexander VI. had extended it to all the faithful.<sup>2</sup>

In course of time, it became customary for the Popes, to grant to the faithful of the whole world the same Jubilee which had been granted in Rome, to be gained the following year, and only for a shorter period, usually six months. Thus did the Sovereign Pontiffs, Benedict XIV. in 1751, Pius VI. in 1776, Leo XII. in 1826.

But Pius IX. in 1875 preferred to extend to the

<sup>1</sup> Ratisbon, Pustet. 1883.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. viii., n. 14, p. 267.

faithful of the whole world the Jubilee of that year.<sup>1</sup> This custom was since followed in the three extraordinary Jubilees which our Holy Father Leo XIII. granted of late years; the first on occasion of his exaltation to the See of Peter; the second in the year 1882, in order to obtain from God assistance in the present necessities of the Church; and the third in 1886, to the end of obtaining Mary's intercession in the present tribulations.

Thus there was no spot under the sun, no nook or corner of the world, however wild, however remote, in which the faithful of every sex, age, condition, nationality, could not avail themselves of the saving Indulgence. For, special provisions had been made in favour of the sick, of the young, of the aged, of travellers, of soldiers, of mariners, of prisoners, and in general of every one detained by some impediment.

So, that is not true which some extreme anti-Catholic writers<sup>2</sup> assert, that, since Luther's time, "the Popes have been more sparing in the exercise of this power of granting Indulgences," as if the Reformation had been for them a check in the dispensation of these heavenly treasures. The truth is, on the contrary, that the movement has ever been growing, and that past largesses are not only equalled, but greatly outdone by new ones.

4. On the other hand, the eagerness of the faithful,

<sup>1</sup> See Beringer, 2me partie, 3 sect.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Rees in his Cyclopædia, at the word "Indulgence."

in availing themselves of these sacred treasures, has not grown cold, as some would have it to be. If the facility which the faithful have of gaining the Jubilee at home, has been the cause that many do not undertake the journey to Rome who would otherwise have done so, the number of those who do flock to Rome on these occasions is conspicuous enough, to show that Christians do not overlook these heavenly treasures.

The Jubilee granted by Leo XII. in 1825 is a proof of what we assert. The troubles caused by the French Revolution throughout Europe, and the death of Pope Pius VI. had prevented the celebration of the Jubilee of 1800. Twenty-four years later, though a relative peace had been granted, yet many, both Romans and strangers, were opposed to the celebration of a Jubilee. Many feared lest it should inundate Rome with a host of banditti and outlaws clothed under the garb of mendicant pilgrims, whilst the Papal treasurer was terrified at the inroad which the expenses would necessarily make into the state funds. Indeed if, in these circumstances, the liberality of some wealthy pilgrim is a cause of enrichment for some churches, the greater number of those visiting Rome are poor and have no means of subsistence, except through the alms of the Church.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties, Leo XII. ordered that the Jubilee should take place. We cannot better form to ourselves an idea of the number of pilgrims who flocked to Rome, and of the

charity exercised in their regard, than by quoting the very words of Cardinal Wiseman, an eye-witness. It is the best confutation both of those who say that, since the time of the Reformation, the devotion of the faithful to the Jubilee has gradually cooled down, and of those who readily subscribe to the statement made by the New Popular Encyclopedia that the Jubilee 1825 had but little success.<sup>1</sup>

“There is in Rome,” writes the Cardinal, “a large house, attached to a Church of the Holy Trinity, expressly established for the charitable entertainment of pilgrims. Hence it is called *La Trinità dei Pellegrini*. It is divided into two sides, one for men and the other for women. The ground-floor is laid out in immense refectories, above which are dormitories, equally vast.

“During Holy Week there is a certain amount of activity in the house, as a considerable number of pilgrims then arrive; perhaps half a refectory and half a dormitory may be occupied. During the rest of the year the establishment sends a huge carriage, now rather modernised, to the hospitals to bring away all discharged patients, to whom, under the title of convalescents, it gives three days’ hospitality, and often leisure to look out for some occupation.

“The revenues of the house, the fruit of charity, are tolerably abundant, and it used to be said that in the interval between two Jubilees, they were employed

<sup>1</sup> At the word “Jubilee.”



the first half of the time in paying off the liabilities incurred, and the second in accumulating for the coming celebration.

“But in addition to the accumulation permanently secured at home, the charity provided immense lodging-room along the wide and airy corridors of religious houses. In the month of November our Confraternity of the Holy Trinity, to which many English belong, lodged and fed for three days 23,090 men and 15,754 women—in all, 38,844 persons, besides 350 members of branch confraternities. From this, some idea may be formed of the scale on which hospitality was exercised during the entire year.” And further, “Scarcely ever did Rome present a more motley crowd, arrayed in every variety of costume, from the sober and almost clerical dress of the German peasant, to the rainbow hues of the Abruzzi or Campagna.”<sup>1</sup>

5. But how is it, it will be asked, that the Church is now so liberal in her concessions of Indulgences? Never was such a prodigality witnessed in ages past. New grants come out every day. The *Raccolta* is growing in bulk and size at every new edition, and some Indulgences surely seem out of proportion, as for a short prayer many years' Pardon are often granted, and sometimes a plenary Indulgence. Is not this an abuse worse than any the Church has ever reproved?

To these questions some give answer, that it is

<sup>1</sup> Recollections of the Four Last Popes (Leo XII. c. iv.).

very difficult to gain an Indulgence, that it is one thing that the Church should grant copious Indulgences and another that the faithful should be sure to gain them, that it is very hard to obtain a Pardon in the extent in which it has been granted; whilst with regard to plenary Indulgences, they teach in a dogmatical tone that exceedingly few are those who *can* gain it, and fewer still those who actually *do* gain it—perhaps a holy nun in some remote corner of the world, or some saintly hermit dead to this life and its concupiscences.

6. For our part, we cannot help expressing our doubts that such a sentiment is anything but honourable to our Blessed Saviour's Body, which is the Church, or beneficial to its members. The Church must indeed have fallen off from her sanctity, if from among the two hundred millions and more children whom she has begotten to Christ, one or two only are able so to avail themselves of our Blessed Redeemer's satisfaction, as to cancel all the debt of sin left to them.

On the other hand, if one or two persons only in such a large multitude can have a probable chance of gaining this plenary remission, these indeed must have arrived at the apex of perfection, and have obtained a perfect dominion over every one of their passions. It is, then, a superfluous and useless work trying to gain such an Indulgence for the rest of mankind, who have to fight daily against innumerable foes, both visible and invisible, who, even

as the just man, fall seven times,<sup>1</sup> and who say with truth the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses."

Such an opinion, whilst apparently aiming at setting forth the value of Indulgences, and urging the faithful to free themselves from every impediment to their acquisition, in reality has no other result than to discourage the faithful, and to keep them away from that which they deem unattainable. This is what St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, would call "building up to destruction, not to edification."

But after all, in what does this great difficulty consist? To gain a plenary Indulgence, one must be in a state of grace, have no affection whatever to venial sin, and diligently fulfil all the works prescribed.

Certainly the difficulty cannot be on this last head. The works are sometimes so plain and simple, that with a little good-will they can easily be performed. Again, the difficulty of placing oneself in the state of grace is not so very great. Although it be true that no man can with absolute certainty know whether he be worthy of love or hatred,<sup>2</sup> yet may we not be morally sure that many among the faithful who live with the fear of God deeply impressed in their hearts, are in the grace and friendship of God?

The only real difficulty, then, will lie in being

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. ix. 1.

detached from every affection to venial sin. But, we should observe that it is one thing to fall into venial sin, and another to have an affection for it. The first means an act, the other a state of the soul. The first is often the result of weakness, of inadvertence, of a habit not yet eradicated, but for the rooting out of which we have already manfully striven. The other implies something more—that is, a certain amount of wickedness on the part of the will, excessive attachment to creatures, with the offence of the Creator.

From the first no man, however holy, excepting Christ, and His Blessed Mother, can call himself free; but many should be, and in reality are, free from the second. How can we imagine faithful souls, that are anxious to please God, and daily seal this desire with the Bread of Life—and their generation, thank God, is not extinct—how can we imagine such as these to be wilfully attached to that which, though not causing eternal death, yet is infinitely injurious to the Divine Majesty?

In conclusion, it would be better, rather than spread such ill-grounded and unauthorised opinions, to *go back* by examination and reflection *to the heart*,<sup>1</sup> and work up the will *to be “ready”*<sup>2</sup> to walk in the path of God’s justice and judgment. Thus shall we gain either for ourselves or for the souls in Purgatory, those heavenly riches which Holy Church offers us from her spiritual treasury.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cvii. 2.

And if, at times, we fail in our intent, not on this account are our efforts vain, for the Indulgence in this case from plenary becomes partial, and though we receive not the pardon of all our debt, yet we obtain the remission of a part of it.

7. But if so, how is it that the Church is now so liberal, whilst she was so sparing in ages gone by?

It would be presumption on our part to pretend to enter into the mind and intentions of the Church. Yet we dare make a few suggestions.

We are, with regard to the faithful who have preceded us, the younger children of the Church. She then loves to show to us, whom she has begotten in a riper age, signs of greater benignity, of more ample liberality, of an easier forgiveness than she ever showed to our elder brothers. *They* bore the burden of the day and the heat, but *we* come at the eleventh hour, and labour only in the cool breeze of evening; yet for all this, she gives us in reward the same penny which she gave to those who worked from the early morning.

As Jacob clothed Joseph with a coat of many colours, so she surrounds us with a variety of goods and favours; and as the same aged patriarch watched anxiously over the life of his own dear Benjamin, and would not allow him to be detained in bondage, so she carefully watches over every one of our steps, not consenting that the chains of our sins should detain us from the source of every good. Our elder brothers, to acquit themselves of their penances, had



to go through a long course of fasting, weeping, and praying ; we, with a few ejaculations, can discharge all our debt, and we have enough in our hands to avoid the excruciating pains of Purgatory.

The Church, then, acts with us as a kind mother who has remitted much of her former severity. And not in the matter of Indulgences only, but generally in all observances. She has relaxed much of the ancient rigour of fasting and abstinence, of the duty of assisting at Mass, of frequenting the Sacraments, of observing Christian festivals. Does it not seem as if she would facilitate for men the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, even against their own will ; as if she were afraid not to complete the number of the elect, and to leave without fruit the Precious Blood of her Divine Spouse ?

8. But in this we cannot accuse her of *too much facility in relaxing the nerve of ecclesiastical discipline.*

In the first place, she is but imitating God's infinite goodness, who is more ready to forgive than to smite, who welcomes the prodigal son with signs almost of untimely joy, who forgets to upbraid, and, in sign of joy and gladness, kills His fatted calf, and adorns His son with the same linen garments he had worn before his desertion.

Then she takes into consideration, on the one hand, the growing weakness of human nature, and on the other, the new and more fierce temptations

that harass her children. It seems hardly correct to say that man is able now to bear as much as he could centuries ago. Whether it be that the physical constitution in general has grown weaker, or that the ideas and ways of modern society are offended at the severe penances of bygone days, or that both combined have worked together to alter the conditions of human life, certain it is, that to call the world back again to the penances of the first centuries, or even to those milder ones of the Middle Ages, might be considered a superhuman enterprise. Add to this the sad, yet most real fact that the fervour of charity has grown colder, and that the spirit of faith has considerably diminished.

There are indeed some staunch Christians, too much and too deeply rooted in the love of our Blessed Lord to have at all suffered from the destroying blast—living monuments of the heroism of the faith and of the charity of ancient times. But they are few and far between, and are rather trophies of the victories of God's power in souls, than captains to be followed by all.

Then, there are the many temptations that the faithful have to sustain now-a-days; the more frequent, though more latent incursions from the diabolical spirits; the inveiglements of a society in which every comfort is to be found; the attacks against the Church, her institutions, her ministers; and consequently the facility of falling, and the difficulty of resisting so many assaults.

No wonder, then, that the Church should have multiplied the means of obtaining the remission of punishment through Indulgences, as she has multiplied the means of obtaining the remission of the guilt through the Sacrament of Penance, in order that the faithful, free from all bond of sin and from the consequences thereof, may more generously "fight the good fight of faith."<sup>1</sup>

If these considerations be borne in mind, it will, we trust, be acknowledged that the Spirit of Christ, who has promised to be with His Church from the beginning, is still guiding her in the present age in the dispensation of these divine treasures, and that the Hand which rules the succession of seasons, and causes the earth to yield different fruits under different climes, has also adapted to the times in which we live, proportionate helps and timely remedies; and as what He does is always the best, so what the Church decrees in His name is also the most opportune.

9. In fact, we can best judge of the advantages which accrue to the Church from the institution of Indulgences, by considering the great good it produces among the faithful.

In the first place, the practice of Indulgences is for the Christian a potent motive for acknowledging, revering, and valuing at their full worth, the sufferings of the saints, and especially those of Jesus Christ. For he who gains an Indulgence is reminded, that it

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 12.

was by the Cross of Christ that "the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us, was blotted out,"<sup>1</sup> and that it is only in virtue of His sacred Passion, and of the sufferings of those who "with Christ are nailed to the Cross,"<sup>2</sup> that he is released from death and the temporal misery annexed to sin. "In order to gain the Indulgences," wrote Bossuet,<sup>3</sup> "it is necessary to unite oneself to the tears, to the sighs, to the groanings, to the mortifications, to the labours, to the sufferings of all the martyrs and of all the saints, and above all, to the Agony, to the Bereavement, to the Passion, and to the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom, all the satisfactions and good works of the Saints are accepted by His Father."

10. Again, Indulgences, especially those annexed to some particular prayer, are a means of bringing the faithful to the practice of the Presence of God, of union with Him, of humble submission to His decrees; in a word, they foster the spirit of prayer. Prompted by the promise of some hundred days' Indulgence, how many fervent ejaculations dart from the hearts of the faithful during the day, and draw from the very Throne of Divine Mercy floods of blessings.

These prayers for the most part are very short, sometimes they consist of but a few words, yet how pregnant with meaning they are! This simple

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Instruct. Nécess. pour le Jubilé, a. 1. Venise, MDCCCLVIII., p. 37.

ejaculation of St. Francis of Assisi, "My God and my all!"<sup>1</sup> or that other one, "My Jesus, mercy,"<sup>2</sup> what an amount of good do they not by themselves work upon the mind and heart of him that pronounces them! How ready must God be to assist by His grace that man, who calls upon Him with such an invocation as this, "May the most just, most high, and most amiable will of God be done in all things, be praised and magnified for ever."<sup>3</sup>

Did Indulgences possess but this virtue of keeping alive the spirit of faith in the presence of God and of His Divine Majesty, and consequently of teaching man the abjection and nothingness in which he stands with regard to his Creator, and of supplying him with a means of continual help from Him, this alone would suffice to show, that they little understood the excellency of spiritual life and the workings of grace in the soul, who presumed to call them nothing but "frauds and deceptions of the faithful." No, there is here no fraud, no deception, but real sterling gain.

Nor should it be objected that the motive which prompts the recitation of such prayers is not worthy of God, since man prays only in order that he may be delivered from temporal pain. Indeed, we dare

<sup>1</sup> Fifty days' Indulgence every time it is recited with a contrite heart. S. C. Ind., 4th May 1888.

<sup>2</sup> One hundred days' Indulgence every time it is recited with devotion and a contrite heart. S. C. Ind., 24th September 1846.

<sup>3</sup> A plenary Indulgence at the hour of death to those who, having often said it during life, and being properly disposed, will accept death with resignation from the hand of God. S. C. Ind., 19th May 1818.



assert that nine-tenths of the faithful daily raise their hearts to God by prayer, to the end of obtaining from Him some favour, who would not otherwise do so. The pure and altogether disinterested love of God, as a matter of fact, is not a very frequent element among Christian people. How many are kept within the bounds of religion through the fear that God would abandon them, and make them lose their temporal prosperity, were they to give up religious practices. Yet, who will dare condemn this impelling—not final—motive, or assert that it is an outrage to the Divine Majesty? And so, if some are induced to pray by the hope that they will lessen the time of their temporal punishment, who will find fault with this? It is one thing that we should be induced to pray by this motive, and another that we should pray solely for this end. The first is right, the second is alien from the mind of the Church and the practice of Christians.

11. Prayer is the foundation of spiritual life, since it is the food of the soul, as the Holy Fathers call it. But the element that safeguards the wholesomeness of the soul, that preserves the Christian from spiritual sickness, is the fear of God. “Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> That filial fear it is which is the beginning of wisdom, gladdens the heart, and gives joy, length of days, and security at the hour of death.<sup>2</sup> That fear it is which makes the saints tremble at the very thought of the possibility of

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. i. 12.

offending God, and faint at the sight of a venial sin.

Indulgences are a potent means to keep alive in us this wholesome fear. They recall to our minds the severity of God's judgments, they remind us how every debt must be paid, even to the last farthing. They make us anticipate the sight of the excruciating pains of Purgatory, the length of time a soul is to be punished there for small defects not atoned for during this life : in a word, they keep before our imagination in vivid colours the sanctity of God, who admits of no defilement, and the carefulness with which we must live, lest we should depart from that purity of life which He requires of us.

And so, Indulgences are as a bright lamp, ever lighted to illumine our path, and prevent us from falling into the precipice that lies open on either side of the road that leads to eternity.

12. But if faith is the foundation, and the fear of God the strength of our spiritual edifice, charity is the coping-stone thereof. That charity which is patient, benign, which worketh no evil, which beareth all things ; that charity which "never falleth away, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed ;"<sup>1</sup> that charity which, to be true, manifests itself by the love of our neighbour, since it is impossible that we should love God whom we see not, if we hate our neighbour whom we see.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 20.

Here is the apex of the perfection of Indulgences, and the highest standpoint from which it behoves us to judge of their worth—they promote true Christian charity. By gaining Indulgences, we are enabled to rescue the souls of our suffering brethren in Purgatory. We have only to offer to God those satisfactory works of ours, and we have an assurance that God will take them into account in favour of those souls which, perhaps also through our own sins, are still suffering in those cleansing flames.

But Indulgences prompt the faithful oftentimes to exercise a greater charity still. For not few are those who, in order to help others, do not wait until they have fully satisfied for themselves. Forgetful of their own misery, they think only of the misery of their departed brethren; they gain the Jubilee, frequent the Portiuncula, or perform some other work by which these suffering souls may be released, even before they themselves have paid all their debt to the justice of God. And this charity is so much the more conspicuous, as they pray for unknown souls, and sometimes for those that are the most forgotten, or even for such as may be detained in Purgatory precisely for having wronged them.

13. Nay, there are not wanting among the faithful some who, mindful of our Blessed Saviour's words, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends,"<sup>1</sup> have made to God, on behalf of the souls in Purgatory, an

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 13.

entire donation of all the Indulgences they will ever gain, as also of all the satisfactory works they will ever perform during life. They even have included in the same bequest, as far as God may accept them, all the Indulgences which others may apply to them after death, thus throwing themselves altogether helpless into the hands of Divine Mercy and Justice, as a slave that would give for the ransom of his companions, rather than for his own, any money which should come to him by right of inheritance or which should be paid for him by his friends.

This is what is called in consecrated language "The Heroic Act in favour of the souls in Purgatory." It was instituted at the beginning of the last century, and noble and conspicuous names are to be found among those who practised it. It was enriched with copious Indulgences by the Popes Benedict XIII., Pius VI., and Pius IX.,<sup>1</sup> and Father Gaspar Oliden, a Theatine, introduced, or at least propagated in connection with this pious act, at the end of the last century, the holy custom, though not essential to the Heroic Act itself, of offering to God these suffrages through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, that she may apply them conformably to God's will, to such souls as she may wish to be the sooner freed from Purgatory.

Of course, one only transfers thereby the satisfactory value of his good works, and not the meritorious part of the same. This, as has been observed,

<sup>1</sup> See the "Raccolta."

is inalienable;<sup>1</sup> nay, it may be said to increase considerably, on account of the charity which prompts the performing of such a good act. So that, though a man, who has made the aforesaid act, exposes himself to remain, perhaps for long years, in Purgatory, in order to atone for the punishment due to his sins, yet he is not the loser by it. For, a slight increase of merits and of grace is incomparably greater and more precious, than a speedier liberation from the greatest pain of Purgatory, as Dominic Soto observes,<sup>2</sup> because the latter is simply the removal of an obstacle to the beatific vision, whereas the former ennobles the soul considerably in the sight of God.

14. Father Faber, in his beautiful book "All for Jesus,"<sup>3</sup> enumerates six advantages which accrue to us, from our giving over our Indulgences to the holy souls in Purgatory. First, it considerably increases our merit, and consequently our claim to glory. Next, it lays the soul that we release under a particular obligation to us, both because of the singular benefit it receives from entering all the sooner into glory, and also because of the tremendous sufferings from which it is delivered. Moreover, it gives us the consolation to think that those, whom we have released from Purgatory, are doing for us in heaven the great work of loving, praising, and glorifying God on our behalf. Again, it adds fresh joy to the Church triumphant, from the fact

<sup>1</sup> P. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 4 Sent. dist. ii. a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. ii, sect. 5.



that to the heavenly hierarchy a new citizen is added who can sin no more, whilst to the Church militant it brings comfort from the gain she has made of a new advocate. Besides, it secures a prompt application of our Indulgences, which, in the possible case that we were in no want of them for ourselves, might remain for many years buried in the treasury of the Church. And last of all, it entitles us to a speedy discharge of our own debt in Purgatory ; for, if temporal alms are satisfactory above most other good works, much more will spiritual alms be so. And if he who gives up anything for God receives a hundredfold, we may have a security that, to recompense us for our generosity, He will so deal with us, that we shall need little Purgatory, or He will inspire devout souls to pray for us.

We might add, that God can certainly derogate from His laws, and apply to us immediately the satisfactions of Jesus Christ without Indulgences. In any case, the faithful who have made the Heroic Act should not feel despondent because they have no satisfaction or Indulgence to fall back upon ; for as David said to the Prophet Gad, "It is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are many, than into the hands of men."<sup>1</sup>

And so, this devotion is no loss, but all gain ; or, if it be at all a loss, it is that of the husbandman, who is willing to sacrifice a few grains of wheat in order to reap in due time a rich harvest.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxiv. 14.

15. But a tree is known by its fruits,<sup>1</sup> and surely if Indulgences are an exotic, a baneful institution in the Church, they must ultimately result in the corruption of morals and in the waning of the religious spirit. Let us see what impartial writers tell us of the fruit brought about by the Portiuncula or the Jubilee.

Of the Portiuncula, Bourdaloue tells us how it has ever been blessed by extraordinary fruits of sincere penance, and how many have been the faithful who, on that occasion, have passed from a life of sin to a life of holiness, from a state of forgetfulness of God to the practice of the most heroic acts of virtue.<sup>2</sup>

Of the Jubilee year, Cardinal Bellarmine does not hesitate to say, from his own experience, that it produces such great fruits of penance, such remarkable conversions, such numerous and splendid works of piety, that it can justly be called the holy year, the year pleasing to God, of all the years the most fertile.<sup>3</sup>

Of the Jubilee of 1825 already referred to, Cardinal Wiseman tells us in glowing terms what good effects it produced. "I wish you could have seen," he says, "not merely the churches filled, but the public places and squares crowded to hear the word of God—for churches could not contain the audience; I wish you could have seen the throng at every confessional, and

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon sur la Fête de la Portiuncule, 3me partie.

<sup>3</sup> Bellarmine de Ind., l. i. c. 1.

the multitudes that pressed round the altar of God to partake of its heavenly gift. I wish you could know the restitution of ill-gotten property which was made, the destruction of immoral and irreligious books which took place, the amendments of hardened sinners which date from that time, and then you would understand why men and women undertook the toilsome pilgrimage, and judge whether it was indulgence in crime and facility to commit sin that is proffered and accepted in such an institution.”<sup>1</sup>

But what proves with greater evidence, that the Jubilees have been at all times a blessing to the Church by their good effects, is the fact of the combined efforts of unbelievers to prevent their realisation and to check these outbursts of faith. And when they failed in this enterprise “of night,” they would slanderously travesty history, and represent Jubilees as a cause of corruption and vice; unless the contrary evidence were so great as to compel them to confess, with D’Alembert, that, for instance, the Jubilee of 1775 had sent the Revolution twenty years back, or to say with Voltaire: “Another Jubilee, and our Philosophy is done for.”<sup>2</sup>

16. On the other hand, we have from the lips of the founder of the Reformation an open confession of the evil effects which the abolition of the practices of the Church, including Indulgences, caused among

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church, Lect. xii. See also “Recollections of the Four Last Popes,” Leo XII., where he amply describes that Jubilee.

<sup>2</sup> Beringer, Part I. vii. pp. 51, 52.

the people of Germany. "From the time that our doctrine has been preached," said Luther, "the world ever becomes more wicked, more ungodly, more impudent, and men are more avaricious, more given to lasciviousness than under Papism. We see everywhere nothing but avarice, intemperance, drunkenness, fornication, shameful disorders, and abominable passions."<sup>1</sup>

And again: "Men, because they find themselves freed from the bonds and ropes of Papism, would also rid themselves of the Gospel and of all the commandments of God; and from henceforth nothing is good, nothing is just, but that which is in accordance with their whims and pleasures. It would seem as if our Germany were possessed by the devil, since the great light of the Gospel has arisen over it. Young men are barefaced and wild; they will not allow themselves to be educated. Old men are contaminated by avarice, usury, and many other sins."<sup>2</sup>

17. Many, says St. Jerome, fall into error because they ignore true history.<sup>3</sup> This is true above all in the present matter. Had the reformers studied the history of the Church, from the time when St. Paul absolved the incestuous man of Corinth, to the time of the martyrs, and through the Middle Ages down to the present epoch, they would not

<sup>1</sup> Döllinger, *La Réforme*, t. i. p. 167, &c.

<sup>2</sup> *Explic. de l'Ev. de St. Jean*. Walch, xiv. p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> "Multi labuntur errore propter ignorantiam historiæ." *Comment. in cap. ii. Matt.*

with so much confidence have asserted that "the doctrine concerning Pardons and Indulgences is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Holy Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God."<sup>1</sup>

On the contrary, had they wished to draw aside from their minds' eyes the cloud of prejudice which covered them, they might have recognised, in the present practice of the Church, a faithful expression of the tradition of the first ages, handed down indeed to us in an unaltered and incorrupted manner, yet spread abroad, strengthened, and perfected, as every other point of dogma or discipline contained in the deposit of faith. And, instead of representing this practice as a breach of discipline and a cause of demoralisation, they would have acknowledged it to be, as one of the benefits bequeathed to us through our Saviour's Passion, conducive to the spiritual weal and profit of Christians.

18. But there was no need of going through such a laborious process of study. It was enough to consider the natural and social relations of man to man, to be convinced that indulgence, in a wider sense of the term,<sup>2</sup> is in the supernatural no less than in the natural order, a claim of human nature.

St. Augustine tells us that, in the first ages of the Church, the bishops often interceded with the magistrates, in order to obtain from them, in favour of the culprits, a mitigation of the punishment inflicted

<sup>1</sup> 22nd Article.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 59.



upon them by civil laws ; and the magistrates in their turn would intercede with the bishops, in order to obtain from the latter in favour of their penitents, a diminution of the pain which had been inflicted upon them according to the sacred canons.<sup>1</sup>

19. Moreover, indulgence is the warranty of peaceful relations within the precinct of the family circle, a safeguard against the breaking off of the chains which bind societies together.

“There is no Protestant father of a family,” says M. de Maistre, “who has not granted indulgences in his own home, who has not forgiven a punishable child, through the intercession and merits of another child, with whom he has every reason to be pleased. There is no Protestant Sovereign who has not signed fifty indulgences during his reign, by granting a post, by remitting or commuting a punishment, and the like, through the deservingness of fathers, of sons, of parents, of ancestors. . . . Let blind or rebellious men contest the principle of Indulgences as much as they please ; we will leave them alone ; it is the principle of reversion ; it is the faith of the universe.”<sup>2</sup>

And if, from the sanctuary of the household or the courts of a commonwealth, we pass on to the world at large, we shall find indulgence a necessary requirement for peaceful international relations. An instance chosen out of a hundred will illustrate the statement.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Macedon. 547.

<sup>2</sup> Soirées de S. Pétersbourg, t. ii. 10me entretien.

It was in 1346. Edward III. had, for many months already, laid siege to the city of Calais. The garrison, which had held out as long as they were provided with victuals, were at last obliged to surrender. But Edward, incensed by the long resistance, would have put all the men to death, had it not been for the entreaties of the brave Flemish knight, Sir Walter Manny. Yet the terms granted by the king were hard enough.

Six of the principal citizens, bareheaded and barefooted, were to present to Edward the keys of the city and then to be beheaded; but which were to be the victims was left to the inhabitants to choose.

Eustace of St. Pierre offered himself for the first; five others followed his example; and, amid the tears and blessings of their countrymen, they repaired to the king's pavilion.

Edward's first impulse was to order them to be beheaded on the spot, for he had suffered much from the men of Calais; but Sir Walter Manny interposed: "Noble king, forbear from doing that which would tarnish your fame: it would be great cruelty on your part to put these innocent men to death." But the king would not listen to his words: "They shall die," he muttered.

However, Queen Philippa, the king's wife, had witnessed the whole scene. Moved with compassion, she knelt before her husband. "Gentle sir," she said, "since at my life's peril I crossed the sea to join you, I have asked you no favour; but now, for

the sake of Mary's glorious Son, and for the love of me, your true wife, take pity on these six burgesses." At these words, Edward's heart was moved to compassion. "Ah, dame!" he exclaimed, "I would you had been anywhere but here; I can refuse you nothing. Take these prisoners; they are yours; do with them what you will." And we know with what kindness they were treated.

We leave it to the candid reader to see what close analogy passes between this fact, chosen at random from among a thousand, and the Catholic doctrine of Indulgences.

20. But in order utterly to abolish the idea of Indulgences from among the people, Protestants ought to reform the very institutions of this country.

"Some years ago," writes Mr. Kegan Paul,<sup>1</sup> "there was an usage at Eton, which seemed to the present writer, when only a boy of thirteen, exactly, though perhaps unintentionally, framed on the lines of ecclesiastical Indulgences.

"The 'Remove' was a part of the school in which geography and history were especially studied, and the making of maps was a weekly exercise, to which an importance was attached beyond their real value as a means of teaching. The masters of this form, and, as far as I remember, of this form alone, were in the habit of giving what were termed exemptions for well-executed maps. A small piece of the corner of the map which deserved praise was torn

<sup>1</sup> Faith and Unfaith, Essays. 1891.

off, signed with the master's initials, and handed to the artist.

"Perhaps a day or two afterwards the same boy was accidentally late for school, and ordered to write out fifty lines of Virgil as a punishment. When the time came for producing the lines, he presented instead his 'exemption,' which was accepted without a word; his previous merits had gained him an indulgence.

"I have some impression, though my memory in this serves me but imperfectly, that the transfer of exemptions was at least tacitly allowed, even if not directly sanctioned, but I speak under correction. If it so chanced that a graver fault had been committed than the more venial offence of being late for school, talking in class, or the like, and that the offender then presented an exemption, not only was it not received in lieu of punishment, but the very pleading the excuse was held to deepen the fault; and here, on a lower ground, was all the distinction between venial and mortal sin."

In conclusion, we cannot help observing how wonderfully strange it is that Protestants should reject the Catholic idea of Indulgences who believe and maintain, as a part of their creed, that after death a universal Indulgence will take place, and sins will utterly be blotted out as to their guilt and penalty.

21. When, on the one hand, we observe the weight of evidence in favour of the Scriptural and traditional truthfulness of Indulgences, and on the other

the flat denial which the majority of Protestants give to it, we cannot help recording an observation which the historian Fleury makes upon a story related by Mathew of Paris, an eye-witness.

In the year 1228, there came to the Monastery of St. Alban, first martyr of England, an Archbishop of Greater Armenia. On being asked by the monks what he knew of a certain Joseph of whom the people spoke much, and who, as the story went, had been present at our Blessed Saviour's Passion, a Knight who was among the Archbishop's attendants, and served him as interpreter, answered thus in French: "His Lordship knows this Joseph very well, and a short time before he set off for the West, he received him at his table in Armenia. When Jesus Christ was taken by the Jews and led before Pilate, this man, then named Cartaphilus, was Pilate's porter; and as the Jews drew Jesus outside the Prætorium, after they had prevailed on the judge to condemn him, Cartaphilus pushed Him roughly on the back with his fist, and insultingly said to Him: 'Make haste, Jesus, make haste; why dost Thou tarry?' Jesus looked at him with a stern countenance and said: 'I am going, but thou shalt wait until I come.'

"After our Lord's resurrection, Cartaphilus received baptism at the hands of Ananias, who also baptized St. Paul, and took the name of Joseph. He was about thirty years old, and when he reached the age of one hundred, he fell into an illness which seemed incurable, and during which he was wrapt as



it were in ecstasy ; but he recovered, and found himself at the same age in which he was at the time of our Saviour's Passion, and this renewal happens to him every hundredth year.

“ He often lives in Armenia, and in the other Eastern countries, dwelling with the bishops and other prelates ; he is a godly man, and leads a saintly life ; he speaks little, and only answers questions which are put to him upon facts of olden times. He refuses every present, being content with what is necessary to him, as food and raiment. He sheds many tears, and expects with fear the last coming of our Lord, hoping, however, for mercy, for he has offended Him through ignorance.”

Fleury, upon relating this fable, which evidently gave rise to the story of the Wandering Jew, says that he does not know what to wonder most at, the boldness of that Knight to relate it, or the simplicity of the English monks to believe in it.<sup>1</sup>

The same thing, to our judgment, could be said concerning the matter of Pardons as concerning this *unindulged* Jew. It would be difficult to say which is most to be wondered at, the boldness of those who, against all evidence, have assumed the task of denying the existence of Indulgences, or the simplicity of those who have blindly believed the traducers. Yet, this should be noted, that the denial was inspired by private interest and the hope of filthy lucre, whilst the belief in this denial was

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Eccl., lib. lxxix. n. 45.

forced by fire and sword upon an innocent people. Strength was made the law of justice.<sup>1</sup> Iniquity prevailed. The nations were stripped of all means of atonement. But "the poor man shall not be forgotten to the end; the patience of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O Lord, let not man be strengthened; let the Gentiles be judged in Thy sight."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. ix. 19, 20.

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